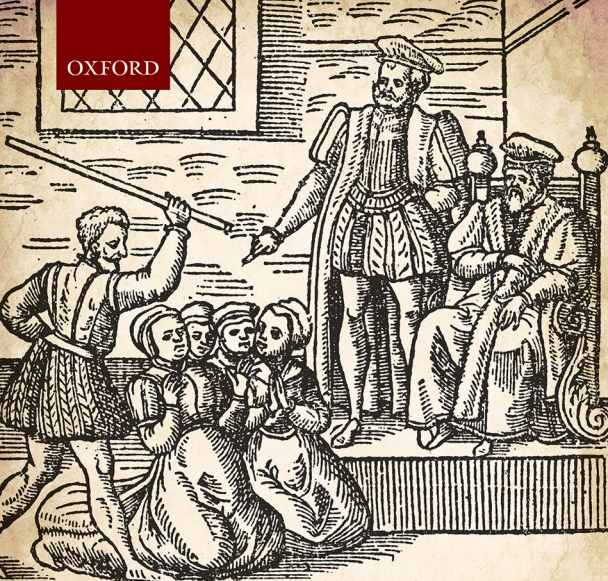


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Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics in Early Modern England

PETER ELMER

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POLITICS IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

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First Edition published in 2016

Impression: 1

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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015943398

ISBN 978-0-19-871772-0

Printed in Great Britain by
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

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Acknowledgements

This book is the product of over twenty years' labour, and so, of necessity, is the cause of many debts. The largest I owe to my partner Vicky, and our boys Richard and Tom, whose patience and support during this period is most gratefully acknowledged. It is a daunting thought to ponder that the fruit of one's mind is older than the fruit of one's loins. I'd also like to thank all the rest of my family, friends and acquaintances who have been forced to listen to endless extemporary lectures on the 'reality' of witchcraft when all they would prefer to have done was discuss sport and politics. I am ready once more to expound on the wonders of watching football at Craven Cottage, as well as attempting to put the world to rights—a tall order on both counts in the current scheme of things. Intellectually, I would like to thank all those academic colleagues and friends, some highly expert in this field, who have commented on my work or made valuable suggestions as to how it might be improved. I first mooted the basic principles that lie behind this book at a conference organized by my mentor, Stuart Clark, at my old *alma mater* at Swansea in 1998. Since then, I have had the good fortune to speak at a number of seminars and conferences, most recently at Tromsø, in Norway, which have provided a valuable platform for stimulating discussion of some of the major themes of the book. I'd particularly like to thank Liv Helene Willumsen and Rita Voltmer for their wonderful hospitality and kindness on the latter occasion, which included a memorable first sighting of the Northern Lights. It was also good to catch up with other specialists in the field, including Jim Sharpe, Alison Rowlands, and Julian Goodare. For all your comments, good and bad, many thanks.

I am particularly obliged to two colleagues whom I have known for as long as I have worked in this field. In 2012, I had the good fortune to be part of a successful bidding team that secured a large, five-year research award from the Wellcome Trust, headed by Jonathan Barry. Since joining the team at Exeter, I have experienced nothing but kind and generous support from Jonathan—something that will come as no surprise to all who know him. He has also read through chapters in draft, as well as a transcript of the final manuscript, making many fruitful comments and suggestions along the way. My gratitude knows no bounds. We are blessed to have a great team in the Centre for Medical History, among whom I would like to particularly thank Claire Keyte who, among other things, printed and collated various editions of the final manuscript.

I reserve my greatest debt, however, to the person who first inspired me to enter into research on the subject of early modern witchcraft. For almost forty years now I have had the pleasure to count Stuart Clark as my teacher, mentor, and friend. I know I speak for so many others when I say that he is *the* historian of witchcraft in the eyes of those left labouring in that particular field. Thankfully, he continues to

read my crude offerings, including a draft of the current volume, offering endless valuable criticism and support along the way. In the absence of a more imaginative gift, I thus dedicate this work to Stuart in thankful recognition and part payment for helping to convince me—a working-class lad from London—that I might just have something useful to contribute to the world of academe.

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Abbreviations

APC	<i>Acts of the Privy Council of England, 1542–1631</i> , 45 vols, ed. J. R. Dasent et al. (London, 1890–1964).
BL	British Library, London.
BLARS	Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service, Bedford.
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford.
<i>Cal. Rev.</i>	<i>Calamy Revised. Being a Revision of Edmund Calamy's Account of the Ministers and Others Ejected and Silenced, 1660–62</i> , ed. A. G. Matthews (Oxford, 1934; reissued 1988).
CCAL	Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library, Canterbury.
<i>CSPD</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic.</i>
CUL	Cambridge University Library, Cambridge.
DHC	Dorset History Centre, Dorchester.
DRO	Devon Record Office, Exeter.
DWL	Doctor Williams' Library, London.
ERO	Essex Record Office, Chelmsford.
ESkRO	East Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich.
ESxRO	East Sussex Record Office, Lewes.
Ewen, <i>Witch Hunting</i>	C. L'Estrange Ewen, <i>Witch Hunting and Witch Trials. The Indictments for Witchcraft from the Records of 1373 Assizes Held for the Home Circuit A. D. 1559–1736</i> (London, 1929).
FHL	Friends House Library, London.
Firth and Rait	C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (eds), <i>Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660</i> , 3 vols (London, 1911).
Foster	J. Foster (ed.), <i>Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500–1714</i> , 3 vols (Oxford and London, 1891–92).
GRO	Gloucestershire Record Office, Gloucester.
HALS	Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Hertford.
HLRO	House of Lords Record Office, Westminster, London.
HLCL	Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone.
LAO	Lincolnshire Archives Office, Lincoln.
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives, London.
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library, London.
LRRO	Leicestershire and Rutland Record Office, Leicester.
Munk	W. Munk, <i>The Roll of the Royal College of Physicians of London, 1518–1800</i> , 3 vols (London, 1878).
NkRO	Norfolk Record Office, Norwich.
NRO	Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton.
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , 60 vols (Oxford, 2004).
RCPL, Annals	Annals, Royal College of Physicians, London, 3 vols.
SARS	Somerset Archive and Record Service, Taunton.
SHC	Surrey History Centre, Woking.
SUL, HP	Sheffield University Library, Hartlib Papers.
TNA	The National Archives, Kew, London.

VCH	<i>Victoria County History.</i>
Venn	J. Venn and J. A. Venn (eds), <i>Alumni Cantabrigienses . . . from the Earliest Times to 1751</i> , 4 vols (Cambridge, 1922).
Wal. Rev.	<i>Walker Revised Being a Revision of John Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy During the Grand Rebellion 1642–60</i> , ed. A. G. Matthews (Oxford, 1948).
WRO	Worcestershire Record Office, Worcester.
WSA	Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, Chippenham.
WYRO	West Yorkshire Record Office, Wakefield.

1

Introduction

The Devil is a name for a Body Politick, in which there are very different Orders and Degrees of Spirits, and perhaps in as much variety of place and state, as among our selves.

J. Glanvill, *A Philosophical Endeavour Towards the Defence of The Being of Witches and Apparitions* (London, 1666), 36–7

In 2001, I published a short paper in which I made a number of ‘highly speculative’ conjectures and assertions with regard to the role played by politics in our understanding of witchcraft and witch trials in early modern England.¹ In so doing, I was consciously following in the footsteps of scholars such as Ian Bostridge and Stuart Clark, who, in focusing upon the ideological and intellectual roots of demonological thinking, emphasized the political significance of witchcraft.² Bostridge was primarily concerned with explaining the decline of elite belief in witchcraft, a long-standing conundrum for scholars of the subject, which he sought to locate in the shifting ideological and political debates in the century after the civil wars. Clark on the other hand, whose study of early modern demonology in Europe ranged across three centuries or more, spoke in broader terms of the political nature of witch beliefs, which he saw as intrinsic to the theocratic mindset of educated Europeans in the age of the Renaissance and Reformation. Both, in their own way, have added immeasurably to our understanding of the political roots of demonology, and my own work, in many ways, is an attempt to build upon these firm foundations. Whereas, however, Bostridge and Clark were principally concerned with exploring the political potential of witchcraft theory, often in isolation from actual witch trials, here I seek to examine how the politics of witchcraft may have influenced and shaped patterns of witch-hunting in England in the century and a half following the Elizabethan settlement in Church and state.

It is now widely recognized that the legal prosecution and punishment of witches in England was not a regular or uniform process. Peaks and troughs were a notable feature of the pattern of English witch trials, though in the absence of a complete set of extant trial records, both in the secular and ecclesiastical courts, one needs to tread cautiously when commenting on the chronology of witch-hunting. Most

¹ P. Elmer, ‘Towards a Politics of Witchcraft in Early Modern England’, in S. Clark (ed.), *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke, 2001), 101–18.

² I. Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations c.1650–c.1750* (Oxford, 1997); S. Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), esp. 549–682.

historians of English witchcraft, however, are generally agreed that an initial surge in prosecutions in the period from about 1580 to 1620 was followed by a lull in the 1630s, a further spike in the years of civil war, followed by a rapidly accelerating decline after 1660. Throughout this period, there is little evidence to suggest that contemporary understanding of witchcraft, be it 'sceptical' or 'credulous' in kind, evolved or was modified to any great extent. The most profound and radical assault on witchcraft as a concept—that of Reginald Scot—dates from 1584, while many of the later treatises defending the reality of witches contained little or nothing of originality. Elite understanding of witchcraft then, which formed the basis of the legal response to the crime of witchcraft, remained largely static throughout the early modern period. Arguments for and against the existence of witches, grounded upon religious, legal, and medical expertise, were readily available to those grand jurors, magistrates, clergymen, and judges who oversaw the trial process. Few, if any, complained of a lack of expert advice and support in reaching a verdict. How then might one best account for fluctuations in the occurrence of trials, as well as the ultimate demise of prosecutions in the late seventeenth century?

Many of the traditional explanations for witchcraft based upon sociological, anthropological and gender-based models would appear to offer little help in this respect as there is scant evidence to suggest that attitudes to the marginalized poor or women—the usual suspects in witch trials—underwent radical change in the period. More promising has been the identification of specific developments in early modern law and science in this process, with a particular emphasis upon the role of the Scientific Revolution in undermining the supernatural, or more properly preternatural, credentials of the witch. However, as Stuart Clark and others have demonstrated, the 'new science' might just as easily be invoked to uphold belief in demons and witches, the existence of witches and their manner of working in the sublunary world providing 'prerogative instances' of the preternatural and a spur to further intellectual enquiry and scientific research.³ In what follows, I do not seek to dismiss entirely the significance of legal and scientific developments with respect to changing attitudes to witchcraft. More scrupulous evidentiary standards in law and new understandings of the mechanical body did, without doubt, underscore a growing tendency toward scepticism with regard to witchcraft prosecutions. However, as I argue in what follows, the opinions of jurors, judges, natural philosophers, and physicians were more often than not shaped by broader political concerns, their legal, scientific, and medical judgements as liable to fall prey to political partisanship as those of their less well-informed peers.⁴ The law, science,

³ Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 251–80. For a recent reappraisal of current thinking on the role of science and medicine in witchcraft, emphasizing the minimal impact of the Scientific Revolution upon decline, see P. Elmer, 'Science and Witchcraft' and 'Medicine and Witchcraft', in B. P. Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford, 2013), 548–74. Similar thinking informs Michael Hunter's recent study of the attitudes of members of the early Royal Society to witchcraft: see his 'The Royal Society and the Decline of Magic', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, 65 (2011), 103–19.

⁴ With regard to the law, for example, John Miller has commented that judges were 'as susceptible as others to the political passions of the early 1680s, when much of the "justice" they dispensed was blatantly partisan': J. Miller, 'The Later Stuart Monarchy', in J. R. Jones (ed.), *The Restored Monarchy*,

and medicine, then as now, did not operate in a political or social vacuum, a truth increasingly acknowledged by the trend toward social constructivist approaches to knowledge among historians of early modern Europe.

But how did politics, broadly defined, help to shape and inform both belief in witchcraft and the prosecution of witches in early modern Europe? This is not new terrain. Some, for example, have argued for an enhanced role for the state in promoting the discovery and punishment of witches as an exercise in state-building. Others have suggested that witch beliefs and witch-hunting were implicit in specific religious and political ideologies. Both approaches have their merits and drawbacks. Witchcraft as a form of state-building has been criticized for being overly reductionist, reducing a complex set of cultural assumptions to a simple act of political will designed to enforce social control.⁵ There is also little hard evidence to support such a claim. In rejecting this approach, others have been tempted to argue for an inverted form of the state-building hypothesis, namely that witchcraft flourished most in those localities where the authority of central government was weak or temporarily absent. In the case of England, this argument has frequently been made in order to explain, in part at least, the East Anglian witch hunts associated with Matthew Hopkins in the 1640s.⁶ My chief objection to both these approaches is that they tend to reduce all witch-hunting to an act of crude, political opportunism on the part of the governing classes, whether local or central, minimizing in the process the very real fears invoked among the governing classes by diabolical incursions into the body politic. As I suggest in Chapters 2 and 4, there are grounds, I believe, to support the idea that under specific circumstances—most notably the creation of a new, reformed commonwealth—those who held the reins of power were more receptive to the threat posed by demonic witchcraft, and thus, through their control of the legal machinery, were more likely to punish the same. In such cases, however, there is no reason to suppose that the fear of witchcraft was either insincerely held or artificially manufactured. On the contrary, the early modern mindset of those advocating political renewal naturally assumed that any such change was likely to be accompanied by a bout of moral cleansing in which a host of diabolical miscreants, including witches, were likely to suffer punishment for their sins.

1660–1688 (London, 1979), 43. There is little reason to suppose that the situation was much different for the earlier period. For changing evidentiary standards in the law as a vehicle for decline, see B. J. Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England: A Study of the Relationship between Natural Science, Religion, History, Law and Literature* (Princeton, 1983), chs 5 and 6; C. R. Unsworth, 'Witchcraft Beliefs and Criminal Procedure in Early Modern England', in T. G. Watkin (ed.), *Legal Record and Historical Reality* (London, 1989), 71–98; M. Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and Evidence in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, 198 (2008), 33–70.

⁵ Clark has equated this approach with 'that most anaemic of all explanations—that witches were scapegoats of the hegemonic process': Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 554. For a general overview of the arguments for and against the role of state-building in the promotion of witch-hunting, see J. Dillinger, 'Politics, State-Building, and Witch-Hunting', in Levack (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft*, 528–47.

⁶ Discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

The ideological roots of demonological speculation in the religious and political mentalities that dominated early modern Europe have been explored in a variety of ways. Hugh Trevor-Roper, for example, was one of the first to argue that the Protestant Reformation and subsequent confessional debates and divisions provided the principal context for witch-hunting in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁷ Within an English context, both Calvinism in general, and puritanism in particular, have been widely touted as providing a congenial home for those advocating witchcraft beliefs and the legal punishment of witches.⁸ Even critics such as Ian Bostridge have argued for a particular affinity between the Calvinist insistence upon covenant theology and witch theory, as epitomized in the writings of the influential English theologian William Perkins (1558–1602).⁹ There is little doubt that within an English context the idea of witchcraft as an essential concomitant of puritan thinking and a stimulant to witch-hunting is widely assumed, as exemplified in the role played by puritan activists in the exorcism controversies of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and the Hopkins trials in puritan East Anglia forty years later. Such a correlation, while undeniable, does not hold, however, as a universal truth for English witchcraft. At certain times and in certain places, men readily identifiable as puritans demonstrated little interest in witchcraft, often exhibiting ambivalence or full-blown scepticism with regard to the subject. As I suggest below, it is possible to account for these and other episodes of puritan witch-hunting in terms that preclude a necessary and intrinsic correlation between puritanism and fear of witchcraft.

A more fruitful approach to the dilemma surrounding the ideological origins of witchcraft, focusing upon the political dimension of the subject, is suggested by the work of Stuart Clark. Clark devoted a large section of his magisterial study of the place of witchcraft in early modern thought to the relationship between

⁷ H. Trevor-Roper, 'The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in H. Trevor-Roper, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (London, 1967), 90–192.

⁸ The term 'puritan', of course, constitutes something of a historical minefield. There is insufficient space here to do justice to the lengthy debates surrounding the definition and use of the term in early modern England. For the purposes of this book, I follow the lead of Patrick Collinson and others who have characterized puritanism as a protean force in English religious life, its proponents largely committed to a programme of further reform or purification of the Church from within. Most puritans therefore tended toward cultural, social, and political conservatism, were obsessed with order and hierarchy, and argued insistently for the preservation of a single, state-sponsored Church of England. For a general overview of the subject, see the various essays in J. Coffey and P. C. H. Lim (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge, 2008). As a corollary of this approach, I have tended to avoid conflating the more radical sectarian groups that emerged in the seventeenth century with their more moderate and conservative puritan colleagues. However, I am aware that this approach is not entirely foolproof, as illustrated, for example, by studies such as those of David Como that suggest a thin and permeable boundary between mainstream puritanism and radical variants of the same such as antinomianism: D. R. Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, 2004), esp. 27–32.

⁹ Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations*, 7–13. The preeminent position of covenant theology in Calvinism has often evoked comparison with the demonological insistence upon the primacy of the diabolical compact. Whether this impacted directly upon witch-hunting in Calvinist territories is open to question. Jeffrey Watt, for example, has recently concluded that it had minimal impact in Calvin's Geneva: see J. R. Watt, 'Calvin's Geneva Confronts Magic and Witchcraft: The Evidence from the Consistory', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 17 (2013), 215–44.

demonology and political thought. Central to that study was the idea that our understanding of the former was inextricably tied to the dominant political mentalities of the period which helped to sustain it, particularly 'those areas of political culture that were largely committed to theocratic principles and where authority was inherently sacred'. For Clark, the charismatic nature of early modern kingship and magistracy—exemplified in the figure of the divine right monarch—stood in diametric contrast to Satanic rule, the legal requirement to punish witches acting as 'a critical test of political legitimacy'.¹⁰ In such godly polities, witchcraft thus represented an act of political, as well as religious, apostasy, the witch's rebellion against God and monarch one and the same. In practice, however, such thinking did not automatically lead to legal action against witches. While it was theoretically desirable for divine right monarchs or godly magistrates to sustain the concept of witchcraft, political circumstance often dictated a different outcome. One such case, as we shall see, which on the surface would appear to invalidate Clark's thesis, concerns the period of the 'Personal Rule' of Charles I in the 1630s, when witchcraft trials would appear to have dwindled to a trickle.

A great deal of research on the legal prosecution of witchcraft has tended to focus, not surprisingly, on periods of intense witch-hunting. There is much to be learned, however, from close study of periods of judicial inactivity, particularly in relation to the vexed issue of the precise nature of the relationship between witchcraft theory and witch-hunting, and the political context that helped to frame the outcome of interaction between the two. Central to this discussion are the twin notions of order and hierarchy. Both were implicit in witchcraft theory, a product of the way in which demonological speculation was steeped in the logic and language of binary opposition, 'a cognitive paradigm of universal application' in early modern European thought.¹¹ Affirmation of the being of the Devil, demons and witches was thus invoked not simply as a way of confirming and reinforcing the faith of Christians in God and the true Church, but also as a useful method for exploring the rules which governed political behaviour in Christian polities. As God's opposite, the Devil and his agents represented chaos and disorder, and sought to mimic, in contrary fashion, true religion. In the process, the idea of diabolical disorder provided a valuable counterfoil to the order and decorum of divine right monarchy, a lesson in mystical politics that found concrete expression at the court of the early Stuarts in the guise of the masque and anti-masque (discussed more fully in Chapter 3).

Envisaging witches in this way—as the agents of inversion, promoting social and political discord—was commonplace, permeating much of the literature, both specialist and non-specialist, in the period. And despite the unruliness and disorder so commonly associated with demonic rule and witchcraft, the Devil himself was regularly lauded as an exemplary ruler of his own domains, a veritable mirror for princes, whose authority was predicated upon the sacred principles of order and hierarchy. Politically speaking, the Devil was thus a complex and somewhat

¹⁰ Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 552.

¹¹ Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 31–42 [quote at 36].

contradictory figure. On the one hand, he represented the antithesis of godly, monarchical rule, using his subjects, both demonic and human, to subvert Christian polities. At the same time, however, he was frequently praised as an exemplary prince, whose observance of the principles of order and hierarchy demanded the respect of his godly enemies. Demonologists and theologians, natural philosophers and physicians, regardless of religious denomination, were thus anxious to know more about the precise nature of demonic rule, which in the words of the English clergyman Joseph Glanvill constituted a 'body politic' in which the different orders of spirits and demons tyrannized and bullied those below them in the chain of command.¹² The apostate and rebellious witch, who ranked among those 'of the meanest and basest quality in the Kingdom of darkness', thus provided a valuable lesson in political philosophy, and an opportunity to explore the nature of good and bad government. The imperfections of the witch's body were especially useful in this respect, symbolizing, in inverted form, proper and decorous order in the godly body politic. Witches thus possessed loose tongues and harmed through oral curses, physical attributes that had their benign counterparts in the power of godly preachers to use the word of God to convince and save souls.¹³ In similar fashion, Clark has argued that the bodies of demoniacs might be said to represent 'some sort of polity', the cure of which through exorcism acted as 'a kind of model for the conduct of politics and the character of royal justice'.¹⁴ The bodies of witches and those they afflicted thus provided important opportunities for early modern Europeans to expatiate on the nature and legitimacy of political authority in a world dominated by the notion of charismatic magistracy.

In England itself, it is important to note that such ideas possessed wide appeal, as likely to be found in the sermons of puritan supporters of Parliament in the 1640s and 1650s as in the works of loyal preachers, like Glanvill, after 1660. Moderate puritans in particular were keen to uphold notions of charismatic magistracy, with or without a monarch, the unity and government of Hell under Satan being cited as an important reminder of the importance of universal political values such as order and hierarchy in earthly commonwealths.¹⁵ Under such circumstances, it is

¹² J. Glanvill, *A Philosophical Endeavour Towards the Defence of the Being of Witches and Apparitions* (London, 1666), 36–7, 40–1. For a more developed exploration of demonic politics, see the work of Henry Hallywell, a Cambridge colleague of Henry More, published in the same year as the latter's final edition of Glanvill's *Saducismus Triumphatus*: H. Hallywell, *Melampronoea: Or A Discourse of the Polity and Kingdom of Darkness* (London, 1681), esp. 14–25. Natural philosophers were equally curious to understand more about this phenomenon. In his private papers, Robert Boyle, for example, noted that 'we know very little of the nature, communities, laws, politicks and government of Spirits': Royal Society Library, Boyle Papers 7, fos 134–5, 136–50.

¹³ For the verbal incontinence of witches, see J. G. Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1998), 107–40. The puritan minister Edward Reyner memorably commented that 'no member of the body is subject to so many Moral Diseases, as the Tongue is': E. Reyner, *Rules for the Government of the Tongue* (London, 1656), A3v.

¹⁴ Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 432, 579, 581.

¹⁵ For examples, see T. Hall, *The Pulpit Guarded with XX Arguments* (London, 1651), 29; G. Swinnock, *Men Are Gods, or the Dignity of Magistracy, and the Duty of the Magistrate* [Hertford assizes, 2 August 1653] (London, 1660), 206. For examples of puritans extolling the virtues of charismatic magistracy, see, for example, T. Trescott, *The Zealous Magistrate set forth in a Sermon Preached at Exeter Before Sir Robert Foster His Majesties Justice of Assize for the Western Circuit* (London, 1642),

probably fair to surmise that demonological discussion of this kind tended to function as an agent of political consensus, emanating typically from the pens and mouths of apologists seeking to defend the status quo. It is important to note, however, that subscription to demonic politics of this kind did not necessitate the actual discovery and prosecution of real witches. Glanvill himself was first moved to discuss such issues in a demonological treatise that contained no references to actual witchcraft trials. His initial interest in such matters was largely academic and theoretical, the product of 'Platonick Hypotheses' which he believed might help to explain a whole range of demonic behaviours, and focused on the thorny issue of how and why spirits were able to communicate with human confederates such as witches. In the process, I suspect that Glanvill's platonic speculations functioned in much the same way as those masques performed at the court of Charles I in which demons and witches frequently figured as the symbolic agents of disorder and misrule.

If there was no intrinsic reason why belief in the reality of diabolical witchcraft should lead to actual witch-hunting, how might political factors explain the uneven pattern of witch prosecutions and trials in early modern England? In my original article on this subject, I made a number of hypothetical claims with regard to this issue. Here, I would like to reiterate the same, as they provide, I believe, a vital key to unlocking this particular problem. In the first place, I argued that those in authority, steeped in demonological thought, were more likely to bestow credence upon actual incidents of witchcraft, and to act upon them, only at such times when their own sense of religious and political order was threatened or challenged. It therefore followed that witchcraft accusations (common) were far more likely to be taken seriously and end in court (exceptional) in those communities and polities experiencing high levels of religious and political conflict leading to acute polarization. The converse was almost certain to follow, as fewer cases of witchcraft were likely to be brought before the courts, whether at local (quarter sessions and ecclesiastical) or national (assizes) level, in periods of religious and political quiescence.

Supplementary to such a schema, I made the claim that witchcraft, much like festive culture in early modern Europe, functioned in a political context in one of two seemingly contradictory ways. In the first place, it sometimes performed an *integrative* or consensual role, helping to reinforce normative behaviour and underscore the social, religious and political status quo. But at the same time, it might equally act as a *subversive* force, encouraging criticism of those holding the reins of power, particularly when the position of the latter was rendered unstable and vulnerable to challenge by broader political events. The outcome was clearly very different according to which scenario prevailed. In the former case, the punishment of witches might be said to promote cohesion and unity within a polity, reinforcing

C2r; A. Tuckney, *The Balme of Gilead, for the Wounds of England: Applied in a Sermon Preach'd at Westminster* [30 August 1643] (London, 1643), 12. The political conservatism of these and other texts, in which puritan ministers consistently invoked the organic image of the English body politic, is consistent with contemporary historical approaches to puritanism as cited in note 8, this chapter.

the hegemonic values of the ruling group, party, or authority. In the latter case, however, it might equally serve as a vehicle for criticism and political complaint, providing a convenient platform for malcontents to vent their opposition to the political status quo. In the first instance, the authority of the ruling elite was strengthened by a prompt purge of disorderly and subversive witches; in the latter, the presence and activity of witches in the community was likely to be interpreted as a sign of divine disapproval and symptomatic of a wider moral and political malaise at the heart of government.

In both instances, it is important to acknowledge the extent to which the ability to deal with the threat of diabolical witchcraft was perceived at the time as a test of political legitimacy. The ability of those in power to nullify the power of a witch was widely understood to be a natural concomitant of the divine and charismatic nature of early modern magistracy. If so, two further deductions would appear to follow. First, godly magistrates were far more likely to invoke the threat of witchcraft at moments of acute political crisis such as regime change or the creation of new polities and governing elites. And second, well-established regimes, secure in their authority, were far less likely to acknowledge the threat posed by demonic intruders as to do so risked casting doubt upon the godly status or legitimacy of the powers that be.

It is my contention in this book that such an analysis is borne out by detailed study of witchcraft in England, both as a concept and a crime. What follows is first and foremost an exercise in contextualization, an attempt to comprehend how the *idea* of witchcraft and the *practice* of witch-hunting were shaped and re-moulded as a result of exposure to the shifting sands of religious and political life, at local and national level, in early modern England. As such it has required, from a methodological point of view, access to a large range of disparate sources. In addition to trial records and published and unpublished writings by contemporary authors which form the staple ingredients for research on this subject, I have also had recourse to an array of supplementary materials—diaries, correspondence, parish registers, wills, and so on—located in local and national archives. These have proved vital in establishing the broader political context in which early modern Englishmen and women wrote and thought about witchcraft, as well as providing crucial evidence of the religious and political condition of those communities that produced witches in this period. In recent years, there have been numerous case studies that have demonstrated the usefulness of micro-historical research of this kind.¹⁶ Here, I seek to build on these examples and extend this approach to other parts of early modern England in a way that allows firmer conclusions to be drawn with regard to the role of political factors in shaping attitudes to witchcraft. In what follows, I do not attempt therefore to construct an all-encompassing narrative history of English witchcraft, but, rather, aim to address the subject through a series of in-depth case

¹⁶ Most recently in the collection of essays by Jonathan Barry, whose approach is broadly sympathetic to my own in emphasizing the political background of witchcraft in south-west England: see J. Barry, *Witchcraft and Demonology in South-West England, 1640–1789* (Basingstoke, 2012).

studies of key texts and episodes of witch-hunting which, I believe, best illustrate and underscore the central themes of the book.

In attempting to construct a politics of witchcraft in this way, I have nonetheless adopted a chronological approach to the material. I have done so, not in order to suggest gradual, Whig-like change over time with regard to attitudes to witchcraft, but rather to show how the religious and political imperatives of specific occasions and periods helped to shape reactions, both for and against, witchcraft. It has frequently been pointed out, but is, I feel, worth repeating, that the most coherent and full-blooded attack on witchcraft was penned at the beginning of our period (by Reginald Scot in 1584) and that subsequent sceptical critiques provided few new insights as to contemporary understanding of the subject. In Chapter 2, I tackle this issue head on by suggesting that Scot's outright denial of the reality of witchcraft was itself the product of political and religious developments unique to the period. Following a brief period in which Protestant Englishmen and women consented to a shared vision of witch-hunting as constituting part of a wider campaign aimed to rid the country of Catholic superstition, the fragmentation of religious consensus and the emergence of a puritan opposition created new tensions and divisions within the Elizabethan body politic. In the ensuing battle for the soul of the English Church and state, witchcraft was increasingly appropriated for partisan, political ends, a situation that Scot, himself a former supporter of puritan evangelism, was keen to challenge given his recent conversion to the religious *via media* promoted by Whitgift and his allies in governing circles. Thereafter—for the next fifty years or so—overt support for witchcraft, alongside diabolical possession, was largely the preserve of puritan critics of the Church, though, as I argue in Chapters 2 and 3, this was never exclusively the case. Many puritan apologists showed little or no interest in the subject, or like the Northamptonshire physician John Cotta demonstrated a commendable degree of restraint while discussing witchcraft. At the same time, there is little evidence to suggest that there was much support for Scot's forthright scepticism outside the upper echelons of the Anglican establishment. Puritans largely promoted witchcraft in the period before the civil war, not because of any particular ideological impulse, but rather because it provided a convenient vehicle for the expression of dissent and opposition in those communities where religious conflict was at its most extreme.

In Chapter 3, these themes are further explored through an examination of attitudes to witchcraft in a period of growing religious and political division and polarization, itself the product of new religious and political policies unleashed on the body politic by Charles I. During the 1630s, Charles embarked upon a new direction in Church and state, which in retrospect appeared bound to sow the seeds of bitter internecine discord. Hindsight, however, is a distorting lens through which to view history. While opposition to Charles' policies of 'thorough' in the years of the Personal Rule (1629–40) grew ever louder, the King and his trusted advisers would appear to have convinced themselves that the realm had never been better governed or more orderly—a pattern, indeed, of divinely ordained rule. Under such circumstances, witchcraft was largely unthinkable, or undesirable, as in Charles'

eyes its manifestation represented a state in disorder and chaos. While there is no evidence to suggest that the King, or those closest to him, were witchcraft deniers, it is fair to conclude that in their world-view, informed by the neoplatonic visions embedded in court entertainments such as the masque, the Devil and all his works were most unlikely to trouble a realm under the government of such a charismatic, divinely sanctioned ruler.

Charles' opponents, of course, had other ideas and were busy incorporating demonological strains of thought in their developing critique of the regime and its religious and political policies. In the war of words that followed in the years immediately before and after the outbreak of civil war in 1642, witchcraft took centre stage as a polemical tool in a bitter and violent conflict for the hearts and minds of subjects. If Anglican apologists had shown little interest in witchcraft before 1640, this was no longer the case thereafter as the congregations of loyal preachers were admonished to avoid the 'bewitchments' and 'rebellious witchcrafts' of their religious and political opponents. Puritan spokesmen for the godly cause of Parliament in the meantime exploited access to the corridors of power at Westminster in order to preach their own strain of demonological invective, one that focused on the citation of biblical exemplars to demonstrate the diabolical and witch-like behaviour of Charles' leading counsellors and supporters. In the chiliastic atmosphere generated by such acute religious and political divisions, steeped in the language of demonic inversion, it is hardly surprising perhaps that some within the puritan-parliamentarian camp should attempt to usher in the New Jerusalem with a war on all those 'enemies within', including the witch, whose existence had helped to precipitate the conflict in the first place. The series of mass trials for witchcraft that took place in East Anglia between 1645 and 1647—the largest such panic in English history—has, as I suggest here, been somewhat unfairly laid at the door of a single man, Matthew Hopkins, who has been largely depicted as a misogynistic zealot and psychopath or variants thereupon. Witchfinders such as Hopkins, however, did not operate in a vacuum. Close study of the geographical distribution of the trials alongside the religious and political histories of those communities that produced suspects for Hopkins and his associates to interrogate strongly suggests that the desire to purge witches from large parts of East Anglia represented more than the actions of an obsessional fanatic. Instead, as I argue here, the efforts of Hopkins, supported by a number of senior figures within local puritan circles, are better understood as an attempt by a fledgling regime to eradicate all traces of 'popish superstition' through a process of moral purgation and regeneration and thus clear the way for the creation of a new holy commonwealth, governed by the theocratic principles of Calvinistic puritanism.

In the event, such aspirations proved untenable and fell victim to the growing religious sectarianism that had plagued English Protestantism since its inception. In Chapter 4, I chart the impact of these developments upon witchcraft, both in terms of demonological speculation and the practice of prosecuting suspected witches. Opposition to the Hopkins trials within puritan circles was itself largely a product of growing divisions within the ranks of the puritan leadership focused on a range of religious and political issues. The execution of the King in 1649 plunged the nation

into a further bout of political angst and religious soul-searching, one that alienated many old-fashioned, mainstream puritans (primarily Presbyterians) and sparked a search for new solutions. Politically speaking, the creation of a republic almost certainly failed to gain the support of anything other than a small minority of the nation. Constitutional experimentation and innovation created political instability, while any attempt to impose a solution to the bitter divisions within the Church, and to re-establish a single form of worship, floundered upon the rock of 'liberty of conscience'. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to speak of a national consensus with regard to religious observation and political structures as the situation differed widely from place to place. Case studies suggest however, as in the examples of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the county of Kent, that where governing elites were able to create workable alliances based on a common religious outlook witchcraft once again proved attractive as a companion of godly reform. The example of Kent, which I describe in some detail, is particularly informative as it suggests that those on the puritan 'left', the radical sectarians, including the Baptists, were as likely as their former 'moderate' puritan allies to encourage witch-hunting in order to legitimate their new-found authority in Kentish society. At the same time, such developments undoubtedly led many who opposed the novelties of the 1650s, including royalists and some old school puritans, to object to witch-hunting and, in the case of Sir Robert Filmer and Thomas Ady, to reject entirely the theological and other premises upon which belief in witchcraft was maintained.

The restoration of the monarchy in 1660 marked a major turning point in English history, for the fate of demonology and witchcraft as well as the religious and political direction of the country. As I suggest in Chapters 5 and 6, the two developments were intimately connected. The Restoration was a complex and protracted process rather than a single event, the outcome of which was uncertain and widely contested.¹⁷ The years after 1660 also witnessed a revival of interest in witchcraft and related phenomena, much of which, I suggest, was related to the religious and political turmoil and uncertainty of that period. In Chapter 5, I chart these developments and describe how the creation of a community of religious dissenters, excluded from the regular channels of political, religious, legal, and educational power, encouraged the preservation of a providential world-view in which belief in witches, demons, and spirits was prominent. For a brief period, the nonconformist faith in such an outlook found support from important elements within the restored Anglican Church, in particular among those latitudinarian churchmen who felt a natural sympathy for the plight of their excluded brethren, many former colleagues, and worked tirelessly for their re-admission to the Anglican fold. Similar motives, I have suggested elsewhere, encouraged latitudinarian clergy and laymen, many highly prominent figures in their respective fields, to

¹⁷ Note especially the comment of Jonathan Scott that 'we need . . . to replace "the Restoration"—that definite article—with restoration: a desire, an ambition, and a process, quickly inaugurated, but tardily and bloodily achieved': J. Scott, 'Restoration Process: Or If This Isn't a Party, We're Not Having a Good Time', *Albion*, 25 (1993), 637.

authenticate the miracle healing of the Irishman Valentine Greatrakes in 1666.¹⁸ Here, I elaborate further upon these themes, suggesting in the process that one of the last great English demonologies of the period, that produced by Joseph Glanvill and his associates in various editions between 1666 and 1681, can itself be regarded as a manifesto for the latitudinarian cause.

But despite the continuing interest of large numbers of Englishmen in upholding the reality of witchcraft, the Restoration itself witnessed a dramatic reduction in the number of actual witch trials, a process which I argue in Chapter 6 was primarily due to the growing reluctance of royal judges and loyal magistrates to promote or encourage the prosecution of accused witches. In contrast to nonconformists and their latitudinarian allies, the vast majority of the restored clergy of the Anglican Church had little to say about witchcraft apart from one important exception. Eager to defend the regime of Charles II, High Church conformists repeatedly reminded their congregations that witchcraft was a species of rebellion. In the process, there is little doubt that they succeeded in redefining witchcraft in the popular imagination as a metaphorical crime against the state. In the hands of clerical apologists for the Stuart cause, the citation of biblical texts such as 1 Samuel 15:23, which was repeatedly invoked in pulpit and press after 1660, undoubtedly helped to reorientate popular understanding of what it meant to talk about witches and witchcraft. Restoration clergymen, alongside loyal magistrates, judges, and jurors, did then continue to subscribe to the idea of witchcraft. They frequently resorted to commonplace elements of demonological thinking in their attempt to vilify, marginalize, and ultimately criminalize the growing opposition to the religious policies and absolutist goals of the restored monarchy. But as they did so, they also demonstrated a marked reluctance to identify and prosecute actual witches, which, as the evidence suggests in Chapter 5, was now increasingly the preserve of nonconformists and their political allies among the Whigs.

These developments in contemporary attitudes towards witchcraft, outlined in some detail in Chapters 5 and 6, hold the key, I believe, to one of the more puzzling aspects of the history of witchcraft, namely the reasons for its decline and ultimate demise. In line with Ian Bostridge and Jonathan Barry, I suggest that it is only by paying closer attention to the local and national political contexts in which ideas about witchcraft were articulated and witch trials conducted that we can begin to appreciate how and why the ruling elites of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England chose to reject or ignore the claims of demonologists and witch hunters. The politicization of the idea and crime of witchcraft was a feature of English demonology from its inception in the mid-sixteenth century. It also, critically, informed legal, scientific, and medical thinking about witchcraft throughout much of the subsequent period. In Chapters 5 and 6, I focus in particular on the way in which different medical approaches to witchcraft and mental illness after 1660 were largely co-opted along party lines. Thus, nonconformist 'spiritual physicians' were more inclined to adopt a pluralist

¹⁸ P. Elmer, *The Miraculous Conformist: Valentine Greatrakes, the Body Politic, and the Politics of Healing in Restoration Britain* (Oxford, 2013).

approach to the treatment of melancholics and the mentally ill, which included the diagnosis of bewitchment and diabolical possession. Their High Church colleagues in the medical profession, on the other hand, were far less likely to proffer credence to such claims, preferring instead to promote a battery of physical or natural explanations derived in large part from the work of pioneering Anglican medics such as Thomas Willis. There is no suggestion here that dissenting physicians were any less receptive to recent innovations in the medical sphere, including the neurological findings of men like Willis. They simply chose to interpret these new developments in ways that allowed political expedience to dictate diagnosis and mode of cure.¹⁹

For much of this period then, developments in fields such as natural philosophy and medicine played second fiddle to the overarching constraints of political imperatives, which grew ever more urgent in the period after 1679 and the emergence of party politics in the wake of the Exclusion Crisis and Glorious Revolution of 1688. In Chapter 7, I examine how political partisanship, now institutionalized, continued to inform both debate about the being of witches and spirits, as well as its impact on specific incidents of witchcraft and the later trials in the age of the ‘rage of party’. Various conclusions follow. In the first place, it is interesting to note that many of the cases of witchcraft that arose at the height of party conflict in the early eighteenth century were now emanating from Tory and High Church Anglican circles—an illustration of the fact that there was no intrinsic ideological link between political or religious allegiance and belief in witchcraft. At the same time, it remained the case that the most deep-seated support for witchcraft and related beliefs was to be found in dissenting circles, particularly among some of the more marginal sects and groups that continued to proliferate throughout the period. Taken together, these two factors probably best explain why most Whig political supporters and Anglican churchmen, including latitudinarians like Francis Hutchinson, now gravitated towards scepticism or indifference on the issue of witchcraft. Firmly in charge of the various organs of Church and state after 1714, the Whig establishment, secure in its grasp on power, felt little need to tolerate discredited systems of belief that were liable to be used by its opponents as a strategic weapon in the ongoing war of words that characterized political life in Hanoverian England.

In the last resort, England’s transformation from a unitary state, in which power was invested in a single, undivided authority, representing both secular and ecclesiastical power, to a pluralist state, characterized by official, if limited, tolerance of religious and political differences constitutes the essential background to

¹⁹ In taking this approach, I am conscious of following in the footsteps of one of the pioneering historians of early modern madness, Michael MacDonald, who argued that new strains of medical thinking based on the work of physicians like Willis ‘appealed to an elite sick of sectarian enthusiasm because they lacked the subversive political implications that religious psychology and therapy had acquired during the seventeenth century... The abolition of family care for lunatics and the abandonment of therapeutic pluralism were the consequences of religious conflict, political strife, and social change’: M. MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1981), 11.

explaining the decline of witchcraft. The process itself was long and protracted. Each political crisis almost certainly helped to erode faith in witchcraft and to push belief in witches further to the margins of intellectual respectability. It may also have encouraged some, as I have suggested in Chapter 7, to continue to assert the existence of witches, but only in those remote 'pagan' regions, safe from the intrusions of political calculation and partisanship. There is clearly still much work to be done in understanding better how belief in witchcraft and the prosecution of witches functioned in relation to other aspects of the social and cultural life of early modern Europeans. Moreover, if the political framework that I have outlined here is to stand up to scrutiny, the example of England will need to be tested against developments in other parts of Europe. In this respect, there are, I believe, grounds for cautious optimism. Politicization, in its various guises, has for example been detected at work in a variety of European contexts. Some of the earliest bouts of witch-hunting in the Simme Valley in Switzerland, which were later described by the demonologist Johannes Nider (c.1380–1438), took place against a background of political tension created by the expansionist ambitions of the city of Berne around 1400.²⁰ Key witchcraft texts have also been extensively examined for their political origins. The *Malleus Maleficarum*, one of the most influential demonological treatises of the period, is now best understood within a political context that stresses the anti-conciliarist ambitions of its author.²¹ Likewise the demonological writings of the French jurist and political philosopher Jean Bodin (1530–1596), as well as those of his adversary, the German physician Johann Weyer (1515–1588), have both attracted detailed political analysis.²² In the case of Weyer, Gary Waite has extended discussion of the sceptical tradition into the seventeenth century, arguing with Clark that the fate of witchcraft was inextricably linked to the emergence of religious pluralism and the demise of confessional conflict.²³ If so, then the 'legal squelching' of witch trials in the Dutch republic by the second decade of the seventeenth century might lend added weight to this approach as well as my own analysis of the English evidence. A number of recent studies in France, Germany, and Scotland also attest to the political origins of some of the most acute periods of witch-hunting and controversies surrounding exorcism and diabolical possession, more often than not such episodes coinciding, as in England in the late 1590s and 1640s, with periods of religious and political crisis.²⁴

²⁰ A. Borst, 'The Origins of the Witch Craze in the Alps', in A. Borst, *Medieval Worlds: Barbarians, Heretics, and Artists in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1991), 101–22.

²¹ E. Wilson, 'Institoris at Innsbruck: Heinrich Institoris, the *Summis Desiderantes* and the Brixen Witch-Trial of 1485', in R. Scribner and T. Johnson (eds), *Popular Religion in Germany and Central Europe, 1400–1800* (Basingstoke, 1996), 87–100.

²² Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 670–82; G. K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke, 2003), esp. 130–1.

²³ Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft*, 192–228; Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 545. While finding much to commend in Waite's important work, I cannot subscribe to the idea of an easy equation between religious toleration per se (a complex and multi-faceted set of ideas in this period) and the rejection of witchcraft, as will become clear from what follows. Religious pluralism was not co-extensive or the same as religious toleration.

²⁴ For France, see esp. J. L. Pearl, *The Crime of Crimes: Demonology and Politics in France 1560–1620* (Waterloo, Ontario, 1999); S. Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern*

It is with these and related studies in mind that I offer up the following chapters for consideration in the firm belief that the study of witchcraft can only benefit ‘with the politics left in’.

France (New York, 2004). For Germany, see D. Lederer, *Madness, Religion and the State in Early Modern Europe: A Bavarian Beacon* (Cambridge, 2006), 77–8, 197–8, 240; A. Rowlands, *Witchcraft Narratives in Germany: Rothenburg 1561–1652* (Manchester and New York, 2003), esp. 185–91, 195–6, 208–9. Lederer explains the demise of ‘spiritual physic’, including exorcism, by recourse to the emergence of religious and political moderation in the wake of a backlash in Bavaria against the influence of militant Jesuit zealotry, previously associated with witch-hating advisers such as Adam Contzen (d.1635). At the same time, it is worth noting that the chronology of witch-hunting in seventeenth-century Bavaria largely coincided with a period of uncertainty and internal conflict in the duchy and that it ceased on the resumption of peace and the restoration of political stability. The political impact of the Thirty Years War on Rothenburg, as described by Rowlands, followed a similar pattern. For Scotland, see P. Hughes, ‘Witch-Hunting in Scotland, 1649–1650’, in J. Goodare (ed.), *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunters* (Basingstoke, 2013), 85–102.

2

Witchcraft, Religion, and the State in Elizabethan and Jacobean England

But truelie I denie not that there are witches or images: but I detest the idolatrous opinions conceived of them . . . But as for those that in verie deed are either witches or conjurors, let them hardlie suffer such punishment as to their fault is agreeable, and as by the grave judgement of lawe is provided.

R. Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 1584), to the reader

WITCHCRAFT AND THE ELIZABETHAN SETTLEMENT

From the first series of witchcraft trials in the second half of the sixteenth century, it is apparent that accusations of witchcraft frequently arose from within communities beset by religious and political tensions that reflected wider debates in the body politic. The public nature of witchcraft trials, the blatant theatricality of the proceedings, and the increasing use of the printing press to publicize such cases, guaranteed a wide and informed general public. At the same time, in the wake of the Elizabethan Church settlement, the growing support in elite and governmental circles for belief in witchcraft and the need to punish witches helped to purge and redefine the boundaries of the new confessional state.¹ In the immediate aftermath of the 1563 Witchcraft Act, belief in, and prosecution of, witches clearly served as a vehicle for consensus and as a positive test of the legitimacy of the new regime in Church and state. This was primarily achieved through the universal adoption in Protestant circles of an idea that was to become a commonplace of English demonology, namely the equation of witchcraft and the evil actions of witches with Roman Catholicism. The mood is well captured by the comment of John Jewel (1522–1571), bishop of Salisbury and chief apologist for the Elizabethan Church settlement, who in a sermon preached before Queen Elizabeth in the early

¹ This point is well made by Norman Jones in his ‘Defining Superstitions: Treasonous Catholics and the Act Against Witchcraft of 1563’, in C. Carlton, R. L. Woods, M. L. Robertson, and J. S. Block (eds), *State, Sovereigns and Society in Early Modern England* (Stroud, 1998), 187–203. The anti-Catholic nature of the 1563 legislation, designed to curb the sorcerous practices of papist enemies of the Elizabethan state, is further elaborated in M. Devine, ‘Treasonous Catholic Magic and the 1563 Witchcraft Legislation: The English State’s Response to Catholic Conjuring in the Early Years of Elizabeth I’s Reign’, in M. Harmes and V. Bladen (eds), *Supernatural and Secular Power in Early Modern England* (Farnham, 2015), 67–94.

stages of her reign alluded to the prevalence of witches in the realm and the urgent need for new legislation to counter the threat posed by these diabolical malcontents.² For Jewel, as for so many fellow Protestants, witchcraft was widely seen as a vestigial hangover from the popish superstitions prevalent in earlier, unreformed times, and as such it required, like other Catholic practices, extirpation from the godly commonwealth. The next two decades provide ample evidence of this process in action. The campaign against wise women and men employing the paraphernalia of what were seen as Catholic rites and practices, which continued intermittently well into the next century, was perhaps the most obvious manifestation of the phenomenon. It was also accompanied by the removal of a number of clerics, some quite senior, from their posts, many of whom were tainted by accusations of witchcraft and conjuring.³ At the same time, Protestant solidarity found expression through the publication and dissemination of a number of cases of diabolical dispossession, most notably at Chester in the winter of 1564–65, when a young girl was miraculously delivered from a series of diabolically induced fits. The prominence of numerous canons of the cathedral and other diocesan dignitaries, and the fact that these events ‘coincided’ with the first real attempt by the somewhat lukewarm bishop, William Downham (d.1577), to clamp down on recusancy in the city, suggests an underlying political motive in line with mainstream Protestant thinking at this time.⁴ Typically, the public nature of these occasions provided an opportunity for zealots to challenge their opponents (in this case the large Catholic population and other sympathizers that included many leading figures in the administration of the city as well as local magistrates like Sir John Throckmorton), while at the same time offering the possibility of conversion and proselytization. Through spectacles such as these, the godly thus sought to

² J. Ayre (ed.), *The Works of John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury. The Second Portion* (Cambridge, 1847), 1027–8. For a good example of the way in which such thinking informed the work of a Tudor magistrate, see the various charges to grand jurors delivered by the celebrated Kent jurist and historian William Lambarde (1536–1601) in which he repeatedly inveighed against the dangers of ‘that witch of the world’, the Pope, and the joint threat posed to the commonwealth by Catholics, Jesuits and witches: C. Read (ed.), *William Lambarde and Local Government: His Ephemeris and Twenty-Nine Charges to Juries and Commissions* (Ithaca, NY, 1962), 101, 110–11, 115.

³ One of the most high-profile cases involved the Roman Catholic Richard Bruarne (1519–1565), Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, who was accused in 1561 of conjuring and using a familiar; *HMC. Reports on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, vol. 7 (London, 1914), 35. Two of the earliest witchcraft pamphlets concerned magicians suspected of harbouring treasonous and Catholic beliefs: see F. Coxe, *A Short Treatise Declaringe the Detestable Wickednesse of Magicall Sciences* (London, 1561); Anon., *The Examination of John Walsh... upon Certaine Interrogations Touchyng Wytchcraft and Sorcerye* (London, 1566). Suspected Catholic priests continued to be hauled before the authorities in Tudor England, accused of sorcery, but there is little evidence to suggest that witchcraft legislation was used as an instrument to persecute the Catholic minority: see F. Young, *English Catholics and the Supernatural, 1553–1829* (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2013), 134–44.

⁴ J. Fisher, *The Copy of a Letter Describing the Wonderful Woorke of God in Delivering a Mayden within the City of Chester, from an Horrible Kinde of Torment and Sicknes 16. of February 1564* [i.e. 1565] (London, 1565); *VCH, Cheshire*, vol. 5: *City of Chester*, ed C. P. Lewis and A. T. Thacher (London, 2003), 109–10. The case is fully described in K. R. Sands, *Demon Possession in Elizabethan England* (Westport, CT, 2004), 13–28 and H. Bhogal, ‘Rethinking Demonic Possession. The Impact of the Debates about the John Darrel Case on Later Demonological Thought, with Particular Reference to John Deacon and John Walker’, PhD thesis (London, 2013), 58–65.

consolidate Protestant support for the new regime in Church and state and promote a broad consensus among its adherents.

By about 1580, however, as consensus began to give way to conflict and controversy within the Protestant establishment, manifest at all levels of government, it is possible to detect the first signs of the problematic and potentially divisive nature of witch beliefs and witch-hunting. As religious divisions deepened in the final two decades of the sixteenth century, it would appear that a confessional divide was beginning to emerge with respect to witchcraft, witch-hunting, and especially the reality of diabolical possession. Now, more often than not, it was the puritan wing of the Anglican Church that appeared most eager to promote the prosecution of witches while conformable colleagues adopted an increasingly sceptical position. The well-publicized exploits of the puritan exorcist John Darrell (c.1562–c.1607), alongside other cases such as that of the possessed maid Mary Glover in London, provide strong evidence for such a statement.⁵ There is also the more elusive and controversial suggestion that one of the key texts in the sceptics' armoury, Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), was itself the product of an anti-puritan backlash in Kent.

REGINALD SCOT'S *DISCOVERIE OF WITCHCRAFT* (1584): A CASE STUDY IN THE POLITICS OF SCEPTICISM

In 1584, the same year in which Scot published his work on witchcraft, seventeen Kentish puritan ministers refused to subscribe to Archbishop Whitgift's injunctions regarding the Prayer Book and were subsequently suspended. Later that year, their supporters, including many of the most powerful figures in Kent, descended on Whitgift without warning in an attempt to force the archbishop to lift the ban. The case was subsequently referred to the Privy Council, which (probably under the influence of pro-puritan members such as Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester) referred the matter back to the archbishop, requesting pointedly that the matter be handled with moderation and that suspension be enforced only as a last resort. The author of the report upon which Whitgift based his case against the Kentish ministers was

⁵ The broad religious and political context of these cases is discussed in D. P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries* (London, 1981); T. Freeman, 'Demons, Deviance, and Defiance: John Darrell and the Politics of Exorcism in Late Elizabethan England', in P. Lake and M. Questier (eds), *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c.1560–1660* (Woodbridge, 2000), 34–63; M. MacDonald (ed.), *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case* (London and New York, 1991), vii–lxiv. For a recent and acutely sensitive account of the Darrell case, which stresses the extent to which he was as much the victim and instrument of others, as the protagonist and architect of the dispute with Harsnet, see M. Gibson, *Possession, Puritanism and Print: Darrell, Harsnett, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Exorcism Controversy* (London, 2006). Gibson's attempt to rehabilitate Darrell—to sweep away the 'thick dusting of abuse' which has adhered to him for over 400 years—and her depiction of his godly supporters as 'neither insincere, revolutionary or devious' mirror my own evaluation of the witchfinder Matthew Hopkins and his supporters in East Anglia in the 1640s (for whom, see Chapter 4): *ibid.*, 27, 56.

none other than Reginald Scot.⁶ Scot's opponents among the Kentish clergy subsequently derided him as a renegade and turncoat, a view that takes on further credence in the light of what is known of the careers of his closest associates and those to whom he dedicated his published writings. Scot's first book on hop growing, for example, was dedicated to the prominent Kentish puritan and lawyer William Lovelace (d.1577).⁷ Likewise, three of the four dedicatees of *The Discoverie* were former evangelical Protestants, who, like Scot, withdrew support for puritanism and opted to defend the ecclesiastical hierarchy following the accession of John Whitgift (d.1604) as archbishop in 1583. As archdeacon of Canterbury in the 1570s, William Redman (c.1541–1602) promoted godly clergy and sought to ensure lenient treatment for nonconformists brought before his court. In 1583, however, Redman, a former chaplain to the puritan sympathizer Archbishop Edmund Grindal (d.1583), switched allegiance when he was appointed chaplain to the latter's successor. Ecclesiastical preferment soon followed, culminating in his appointment as bishop of Norwich in 1594.⁸ The other two men, whose former puritanical sympathies Scot had once shared and to whom he dedicated *The Discoverie* in the hope that they might use their influence to prevent further witch trials, were prominent local magistrates and leading figures in the government of Elizabethan Kent. Scot's choice of the lawyer and judge Sir Roger Manwood (d.1592) is particularly interesting as by the 1580s he is said to have held 'almost proconsular sway' in Kent, exerting considerable power and influence through well-developed patronage networks. At the same time Manwood threw in his lot with the 'Whitgiftian reaction'.⁹ The key figure here, whose magnanimity and patronage is dutifully acknowledged by Scot in the preface to *The Discoverie*, was his cousin, Sir Thomas Scott (d.1594), of Scot Hall. At the fateful meeting with Archbishop Whitgift that took place on 8 May 1584, Scott led the delegation of Kentish gentry that sought to deliver a petition on behalf of the deprived ministers of the county. As a client of the earl of Leicester and one of the 'natural leaders' of his county, he was widely expected to use his authority and powers of persuasion to force the archbishop's hand. However, the meeting proved a disaster and all but one of

⁶ The contents of this document, which no longer exists, can nonetheless be reconstructed from a contemporary manuscript account written by one of Scot's adversaries in answer to the various charges levelled at them by Scot; see Anon., 'The defense of the mynisters of Kent. A true and just defense of the suspended mynisters of Kent against a false and sclaunderous libell, conceived by way of commenting upon the preface of their doubttes, and closelie exhibited against them by the author thereof R.S., to the Archb.', DWL, Morrice MS B (1), fos 405–26. Scot's authorship is strongly suggested by the marginal reference to the recently published *Discoverie of Witchcraft* on folio 405. An edited version of the manuscript was published in A. Peel (ed.), *The Seconde Parte of a Register. Being a Calendar of Manuscripts under that Title Intended for Publication by the Puritans about 1593*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1915), i, 230–41. For the general background to the events described here, see P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1982), 252–9 and P. Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent 1500–1640* (Hassocks, Sussex, 1977), 169–72.

⁷ R. Scot, *A Perfite Platforme of a Hoppe Garden, and Necessary Instructions for the Making and Mayntenance Thereof* (London, 1574). For Lovelace, see A. J. Pearman, 'The Kentish Family of Lovelace', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 10 (1876), 197–200.

⁸ ODNB, sub Redman, William; Clark, *English Provincial Society*, 167–8.

⁹ ODNB, sub Manwood, Sir Roger; Clark, *English Provincial Society*, 137, 278, 289.

the twenty-five Kentish delegates stormed out of the meeting promising to pursue the matter further with the Queen and Privy Council. The only man to remain was Sir Thomas Scott who was apparently impressed by the strength of the archbishop's case.¹⁰

The timing of these events, coinciding with the publication of Scot's work on witchcraft, is surely significant. One of the main objections raised by Scot to witch-hunting lay in the extent to which he believed it divided communities and created social disorder, in much the same way as he now believed that the puritans' pursuit of godly reform often set members of parishes at each other's throats. Scot, in fact, cites a number of cases from Kent in which the two phenomena, witch-hunting and puritanism, may have coalesced. These include the exorcism of a maid at Westwell in 1574 [bk 7, chs 1–2]; the bewitching of various people at Brenchley, including the vicar John Ferrall and one of his sons in 1581 [bk 1, ch. 2]; the case of a couple at Sellindge who admitted entering into a pact with the Devil [bk 3, ch. 10]; and the sufferings through witchcraft experienced by the wife of the mayor of New Romney [bk 12, ch. 16]. All four places mentioned by Scot were centres of intense puritan activity. The villages of Brenchley and Sellindge, for example, were home, respectively, to the godly Fane and Heyman families,¹¹ while the borough of New Romney was a hotbed of political and religious faction.¹² Scot's citation of the case

¹⁰ Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 259. While it is impossible to speak with certainty of the reasons behind Sir Thomas' *volte face*, it remains highly probable that he was playing a dangerous double game, pretending on the one hand to hold and direct the pro-puritan line within the county while at the same time plying Whitgift, via his cousin Reginald, with damning evidence of the divisive activities of a core of puritan ministers in Kent. Whatever the case, Sir Thomas' repudiation of the extremists seems to have been decisive. Within weeks, the puritan ministers and their allies were split over how to react to this latest setback. Most eventually subscribed, but some held firm, becoming marginalized in the process. The winner was undoubtedly Sir Thomas Scott, who, by claiming to uphold order in the county and so occupy the middle ground, was able to reap the rewards of his political manoeuvring. It should be stressed that Whitgift's account of the meeting held on 8 May 1584 makes it abundantly clear that he was using the documents supplied to him by Reginald Scot as the basis for his showdown with the Kentish delegation: see BL, Lansdowne MS 42, fos 185–6.

¹¹ At Brenchley, there is a hint of Ferrall's rigid Calvinism in Scot's description of him as one who 'thought himselfe so privileged, as he little mistrusted that God would visit his children with sicknes': R. Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 1584), 5. The accused witch, Margaret Simons, may also have been singled out for the heterodox beliefs of her husband John. In the 1550s, one John Symes of Brenchley was said to have denied the divinity of Christ: BL, Harleian MS 421, fos 94–5. One of the most notable features of the case at Brenchley was the degree to which the vicar's role in fomenting the accusations levelled against Simons, as well as the general tenor of his ministry, sowed bitter divisions within the parish. Given the puritan emphasis on preaching, it is difficult not to read significance into the fact that one of Ferrall's chief complaints against Simons consisted of the claim that she had bewitched his voice, making it impossible for him to carry out his ministerial duties. His opponents, on the other hand, spread rumours that his inability to preach was the result of his contracting a dose of the pox. Interestingly, twenty years later Ferrall's son, Tobias, by then vicar of Dallington in Sussex, was himself a witness in a case of witchcraft involving one of his parishioners: Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, 143, 192. At Sellindge, where Ade, the wife of Simon Davie, was said to have voluntarily confessed to having made a pact with the Devil, there was also evidence of a puritan tradition. In the purge of 1584, its minister Richard Halden was among those suspended by Whitgift, though he subsequently availed himself of the protective patronage of the local godly family, the Heymans: Scot, *Discoverie*, 55–7; Clark, *English Provincial Society*, 440n.

¹² I concur with Clark who suggests that the struggles at New Romney, which frequently required the intervention of central government, 'deserve a study in their own right': *ibid.*, 253.

at New Romney is particularly interesting as in March 1584, just a few weeks before the fateful meeting between the pro-puritan gentry of Kent and Archbishop Whitgift, Scot's cousin and patron Sir Thomas Scott was engaged in the examination of the husband of one of the witch's victims, Thomas Epps, who was accused, among other things, of disenfranchising four jurors prior to the last borough elections. On being questioned by Scott, he exhibited typical puritan zeal by claiming that he had expelled the members because of their drunkenness and irreverent behaviour in church.¹³ However, the firmest evidence to support the contention that Scot was seeking to tar the Kentish puritans with the brush of excessive zeal and superstition through their promotion of witchcraft and related ideas can be found in the case of the alleged dispossession of the 'pythonist of Westwell', Mildred Norrington.¹⁴ In 1574, Mildred was exorcized by the minister of Westwell, Roger Newman (d.1580), assisted by a neighbouring vicar John Brainforth or Brainford (d.1605). Westwell, near Ashford, lay at the heart of Elizabethan Kentish puritanism. In 1584, its vicar, John Elvin, as well as the vicar of the neighbouring parish of Eastwell, Josias Nicholls, were among those puritan ministers who were refusing to conform to Whitgift's articles.¹⁵ Elvin's predecessor Newman, a Marian exile whose brother had been burned at the stake, and his accomplice Brainforth, were both active puritans who attended the Ashford exercise, a prototype of the puritan prophesying movement, in the 1570s.¹⁶ Moreover, at least one of the lay witnesses to the exorcism of Norrington, John Frenchborne, was a puritan sympathizer. In 1584 he signed a petition addressed to Whitgift on behalf of Lever Wood, the suspended Presbyterian minister of neighbouring Boughton Monchelsea, who was seeking reinstatement to the living.¹⁷

The fraudulent proceedings at Westwell, as described by Scot, were finally brought to an end by the intervention of two local justices, Sir Thomas Wotton (1521–1587) and George Darrell. On the surface, the actions of these two men would appear to undermine my thesis since both were active supporters of the godly in Kent, both having signed petitions in support of the oppressed puritan ministers

¹³ TNA, SP 12/169/40 VII, fos 87–122; calendared in *CSPD, 1581–1590*, 167–8. The dispute between the two factions in the borough had its origins in the attempt by William Southland, mayor in 1581, to oust William Epps (uncle of Thomas) and his supporters from the government of the town. Epps served as mayor of New Romney on three occasions: 1576–77, 1581–82, 1583–84. His wife, Mary, who supposedly suffered bewitchment, was the daughter of Laurence Stuppeny.

¹⁴ Scot, *Discoverie*, 130–1.

¹⁵ Clark, *English Provincial Society*, 172. Both men later represented the Kentish puritans at the Dedham Presbyterian conference in 1587 and suffered at the hands of Whitgift's commissary as a result: Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 321; LPL, MS 2014, fo. 81 [John Elvin to Whitgift, 22 January 1589/90].

¹⁶ Newman was vicar of Westwell, 1567–80, and Brainforth vicar of Kennington, 1564–1605: BL, Harleian MS 416, fos 123–4 [John Hall to John Foxe, 1566]; P. Clark, 'The Prophesying Movement in Kentish Towns during the 1570s', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 93 (1977), 83, 84, 89 and n. Brainforth's parish of Kennington was another hotbed of religious zealotry. In the 1590s, John Eaton of Kennington was charged with a variety of misdemeanours by the church commissioners including the claim that he had made personal attacks on the archbishop as well as condemning the condition and government of the Church of England: P. Clark, 'The Ecclesiastical Commission at Canterbury, 1572–1603', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 89 (1974), 194.

¹⁷ BL, Lansdowne MS 42, fo. 87.

in 1583–84.¹⁸ However, it is possible, I believe, to accommodate this apparent anomaly if we look a little closer at the strategy that Reginald Scot, and his patron Sir Thomas Scott, were pursuing in the critical period between 1583 and 1584. With the death of Archbishop Grindal, the balance of power in the Church in general, and Kent in particular (where the authority of the archbishop was of necessity greater than elsewhere), had swung irreversibly away from the puritans and their supporters, both at court and in the country. Prior to 1583, the cause of puritanical evangelism had found a dogged defender in Grindal, as well as receiving important support at court from leading figures such as Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester (c.1533–1588). Sir Thomas Scott himself had formerly adhered to the earl's cause, but the succession of Whitgift to the see of Canterbury changed everything. In all probability, Scott was one of the first to realize which way the wind was blowing, and he tacked accordingly. Now, attention in ecclesiastical and government circles was on the social and religious damage that continuing support for hot-headed puritan preachers would incur. At the same time, a concerted effort was being made to recruit those who had formerly supported, or were sympathetic to, the puritans' cause to a new approach to ecclesiastical matters that stressed the need for order and conformity. Reluctant to alienate former allies within the ranks of the Kentish gentry, Scott thus continued to court, and hopefully recruit, old friends such as Thomas Wotton while at the same time withdrawing support from those ministers who refused to conform to the new articles. I would therefore suggest that Reginald Scot's description of Wotton in *The Discoverie* as 'a man of great worship and wisdom, and for deciding and ordering of matters in this commonwealth, of rare and singular dexterity' was an example of this strategy in action.¹⁹ Scot's target, if my interpretation is correct, was thus those puritan ministers who, in the eyes of Whitgift and others, threatened social, religious, and political anarchy in Church and commonwealth, and not the gentry who misguidedly supported them.

In confronting the Kentish petitioners in May 1584, the fiery Whitgift had hinted at one point in his harangue that his puritan critics were in fact closet Anabaptists. Scot had made a similar point in the preface to his work on witchcraft, where he compared the ubiquitous white witch with those who:

deal in the Common-wealth, much like as a certain kind of Cynical people do in the Church, whose severe sayings are accounted among some such Oracles, as may not be doubted of; who in stead of learning and authority (which they make contemptible) do feed the people with their own devices and imaginations, which they prefer before all

¹⁸ Peel (ed.), *Seconde Parte of a Register*, i, 108–20. For a brief account of the life and career of Thomas Wotton, one of the leaders of the Kentish gentry in opposition to Whitgift, see *ODNB*, sub Wotton, Sir Edward; Clark, 'Ecclesiastical Commission', 186–9. While Wotton was no friend to radical dissent or Roman Catholicism, supporting Archbishop Matthew Parker in his campaigns against both, his early sympathies clearly lay with the former.

¹⁹ Scot, *Discoverie*, 131. Scot's blandishments would appear to have failed. Wotton remained a strong supporter of Kentish puritanism, while his son Henry gleefully wrote from Stade, near Bremen, in 1589 that 'this town is able out of its own provision to refute fifty Mr Reginald Scotts': BL, Stowe MS 697, fo. 150.

other Divinity: and labouring to erect a Church according to their own fancies, wherein all order is condemned . . . they would utterly overthrow the true Church . . . And of this sect the chief author at this time is one Brown, a fugitive, a meet cover for such a cup: as heretofore the Anabaptists, the Arrians, and the Franciscan Fryers.²⁰

These do not appear, on the surface at least, to constitute the sentiments of an extreme religious radical and Nicodemite, as recently suggested by David Wootton.²¹ On the contrary, Scot's explicit disavowal of religious heterodoxy and opposition to radical puritanism in *The Discoverie* suggests a man fearful of religious extremism, an inference that is also borne out by the evidence of others who made claims on his friendship and support. A notable example can be found in the work of the Kent cleric, Nicholas Gyer, who dedicated a work on phlebotomy to Scot in 1592.²² Gyer first met Scot at Scot Hall, the home of Sir Thomas Scott, 'under which rooffe I came by your good meanes', and where Gyer partly wrote his book. At the same time, it was through the good offices of Scot that Gyer's work gained the approval of John Coldwell (c.1535–1596), then dean of Rochester but shortly to receive the bishopric of Salisbury, who was also one of the original dedicatees of Scot's work on witchcraft. Coldwell's approbation was clearly important for Gyer, promising patronage and office, as well as helping to justify Gyer's dual role as both physician and priest.²³ In defending such actions, however, Gyer contrasted the good that might accrue 'to the Church of God and common welth of this land, in this simple translation or collection' with the damage done by those 'divers dogged Divines of this age, Penry, Browne, Barrow, and the Sectaries', who 'in stead of the true bread of life that came down from heaven . . . fed most daungerously the soules of men with divilish devises, & in their fantasies accounted

²⁰ Scot, *Discoverie*, Bir.

²¹ D. Wootton, 'Reginald Scot/Abraham Fleming/The Family of Love', in S. Clark (ed.), *Languages of Witchcraft. Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke, 2001), 119–38. The claim is repeated in Wootton's article on Scot in the *ODNB*. To a large extent, as Wootton admits, the evidence for Scot's membership of the Family of Love is tenuous, largely based as it is on the contribution made by the jobbing writer Abraham Fleming to Scot's *Discoverie*. At the same time Scot is known to have made a minor contribution to Fleming's 1587 edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Wootton argues that what links the two men is their putative membership of the elusive sect known as the Family of Love. However, a more prosaic explanation may lie in the fact that Scot's publisher, Henry Denham, employed Fleming in various capacities in the publication of six different works between 1579 and 1584, when Denham was also responsible for printing Scot's *Discoverie*. Scot himself had employed Denham as the publisher of his first work on hops in 1574. If anything, Fleming probably shared Scot's new-found antipathy towards puritanism. In 1582, at the height of the campaign against London puritans, he dedicated a collection of prayers to one of their foremost opponents, John Aylmer (d. 1594), bishop of London. Seven years later he ingratiated himself with Whitgift by dedicating his translation of Virgil's *Georgicks* to the archbishop. He was subsequently collated to the rectory of St Pancras, Soper Lane, London: *ODNB*, sub Fleming, Abraham.

²² N. Gyer, *The English Phlebotomy: Or, Method and Way of Healing by Letting of Blood* (London, 1592). Little is known of Gyer. After proceeding to his BA from Clare College, Cambridge, in 1570, he served various Kent livings: Sutton Valence (1572–74), East Peckham (1573–77) and West Malling (1577–84): Venn, ii, 205; W. H. Frere (ed.), *Registrum Matthæi Parker Diocensis Cantuariensis AD 1559–1575*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1933), iii, 1103, 1108.

²³ Gyer, *English Phlebotomy*, A5v, A7r [where, in addition to Coldwell, Gyer cites the examples of Thomas Penny (d. 1589) and William Turner (d. 1568) as examples of priest-physicians]. For Coldwell, who possessed a Cambridge MD (1564), see *ODNB*.

themselves terrene Gods, & desirous of nothing more then among their auditors, to have their own positions horrible & hereticall to be admired & embraced as oracles from heaven'. Thanking Scot for his zealous advocacy of Gyer's 'preferment' and 'credit', he concludes by defending conformists from the charge of their sectarian opponents that they are nothing other than closet atheists and Papists for defending the religious status quo, and makes a plea for peace in the Church:

If the end of this more then Pharisaiical hipocrisie be not the disturbance of Gods peace & the Queenes, the wisest men in this land have utterly lost their wittes, which these men with al their learning, if they have it in such plenty as they would seeme to have, shall never make me beleefe for a trueth. Experience of these daies proove, that by the meanes of these men, we are al so generally infected with Cleargie factions and Laie factions, that as we are full of fansies, so we follow nothing but factions, which I pray God speedillie redress for his great mercies sake.²⁴

Gyer's religious conservatism was mirrored in his medical views. Opposed to the fraudulent methods employed by white witches and mountebanks in healing the sick, Gyer stressed the need to employ sound medical precepts based on orthodox authors such as Hippocrates, Galen, and Avicenna, a view echoed by Scot in *The Discoverie* where he cited Galen as a fellow sceptic and equated those 'enchanting Paracelsians [who] abuse the People, leading them from the true order of Physicke to their charmes' with radical sectaries such as the Brownists.²⁵ In supporting men like Gyer, then, Scot was providing practical support to a man who, like himself, wished to heal, through traditional and orthodox means, the wounds and ailments of his parishioners and neighbours (Scot in turn was praised by Gyer for his compassion in visiting and counselling the sick). Seen through the lens of the contemporary commonplace of the body politic, both men thus saw themselves as physicians to the commonwealth and as the composers of religious, social, and other divisions within their community in stark contrast to the puritan ministers of Kent whom Scot had accused of introducing faction into his native county. Rather than interpreting Scot's concern with good neighbourliness and social concord in *The Discoverie* as the product of extreme religious heterodoxy, I would prefer to argue that his relationship with clerics like Gyer suggests it could just as easily have derived from a position of religious conformity, which placed equal weight on the importance of communal and social cohesion. Seen from this perspective, the activity of witch hunters and white witches was equally open to censure, as both undermined order in the body politic, a point echoed by Gyer in his dedication to Scot where he claimed that the commonwealth would be better served if magistrates stopped punishing innocent witches and sought instead 'by due execution of lawe & iustice the blood of these bloodsuckers

²⁴ Gyer, *English Phlebotomy*, A6v–A7r.

²⁵ Ibid.; Scot, *Discoverie*, Bir, 239–40. Paracelsism provided yet another potential reason for Scot's hostility to the earl of Leicester. The latter was a keen supporter of alchemical speculation, while many in his circle, such as John Dee, exhibited a keen interest in the works of the radical Swiss physician Paracelsus (1493–1541). One of the earl's chaplains, John Fills (d. 1578), bequeathed a 'Paracelsian still' to his surgeon: D. Harley, 'Rychard Bostok of Tandridge, Surrey (c.1530–1605), M.P., Paracelsian Propagandist and Friend of John Dee', *Ambix*, 47 (2000), 29–36; *ODNB*, sub Fills, John.

indeede, who for want of skil in . . . blood letting . . . either presently kyl or at leastwise accelerate the immature deaths of dyvers faythful Christians to God, and good subiects to their Sovereigne'.²⁶

Scot's assault on witchcraft belief was then partly a response to local conditions, but, as I have already hinted, it may also have owed something to national factors, particularly the factional divisions and rivalries that infected the highest echelons of Elizabethan government. The central figure here was surely Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester. One of the dominant figures at court in the 1570s and early 1580s, Leicester also exerted considerable sway in local politics, none more so than in the county of Kent where he held the important office of High Steward of the Archiepiscopal Liberties. Prior to 1583–84, he dominated political affairs in Kent, where he was able to count on the support of numerous local dignitaries, including Sir Thomas Scott. At the same time, he used his considerable power and wealth to promote the cause of Elizabethan puritanism.²⁷ However, following the accession of Archbishop Whitgift in 1583, the earl's grip on power and ability to defend his puritan allies came under challenge with the result that many of his erstwhile supporters, Scott included, began to defect to those other great power brokers at court, Walsingham and Cecil. Scott's desertion of the puritan cause and Leicester may have been prefigured by a number of incidents that Reginald Scot chose to highlight in his book on witchcraft. In particular, his decision to reprint a letter written by one T. E., in which the author confessed to having once practised magical arts but having now recanted, is especially revealing as the author (almost certainly one Thomas Elkes) refused to provide Scot with any further details 'except I had the better warrant from my L[ord] of Leicester, who is my verie good Lord, and by whome next under God . . . I have been preserved; and [am] therefore loth to do any thing that may offend his Lordships eares'.²⁸ Scot's intention here was surely to embarrass the earl and to portray him

²⁶ Gyer, *English Phlebotomy*, A4v–A5r. For an attempt to construe Scot's 'enlightened' views on melancholy, a disease frequently associated with witchcraft at this time, as a manifestation of his paternalistic approach and political compassion toward the poorest in Kent society, see C. Bartram, '“Melancholic Imaginations”: Witchcraft and the Politics of Melancholia in Elizabethan Kent', *Journal of European Studies*, 33 (2003), 203–11. On occasion, Scot's fellow countrymen also praised the worth of traditional healers such as wise women in contrast to the harmful preaching of the godly. When the Canterbury gaoler Leonard Norgrove allowed a convicted witch to escape in 1570, he is alleged to have defended his actions by stating that 'she did more good by her physick than Mr Pudall and Mr Wood, ministers, by their preaching': J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records: Kent Indictments Elizabeth I* (London, 1989), 96–7.

²⁷ For debate concerning the extent of Leicester's commitment to the godly cause, see S. Adams, 'A Godly Peer? Leicester and the Puritans', *History Today*, 40 (1990), 14–19.

²⁸ Scot, *Discoverie*, 467–9. The letter is signed by T. E., 'practitioner in physick, and other vain arts, in times past', and dated 8 March 1582 [i.e. 1583]. T. E. was almost certainly the same as the magician, Thomas Elkes, who with others was indicted for conjuring sometime in the early 1580s: BL, Harleian MS 160, fo. 187r; TNA, SP 12/186, fos 221–5; *CSPD, 1581–1590*, 309. Elkes was interrogated about his role in treasure-hunting, alchemy, and the use of a familiar. He was subsequently found guilty, but escaped hanging through a late reprieve (probably through the intercession of the earl of Leicester): R. Holinshed, *The Third Volume of Chronicles . . . Now Newlie . . . Continued . . . to the Yeare 1586* (London, 1587), 1314–15; J. Stow, *The Annales of England* (London, 1592), 1178–9. Glyn Parry, who argues that Scot's work on witchcraft was a subtle attempt to 'marginalise Presbyterianism . . . by connecting claims to spiritual illumination with politically suspect forms of magic amongst the lower

in as poor a light as possible, as the defender of men who were widely suspected by the earl's enemies of using magic against the Queen. Further evidence that this is what Scot intended is suggested by the late inclusion in *The Discoverie* of an approving reference to Henry Howard's recently published *A Defensative against the Poyson of Supposed Prophecies* (1583). This is a curious work that consisted of a powerful polemic against English puritanism and the institution of 'prophesying' couched in terms of an attack upon political prognosticators and those who consulted with cunning men. By covertly attacking the celebrated magus, John Dee (1527–1609), there is little doubt that Howard's principal target was Dee's patron, the earl of Leicester, and the latter's Protestant friends, who, the crypto-Catholic Howard intimated, were using their diabolical powers to control the Queen and thus prevent the crown from descending to its rightful recipient, Mary, Queen of Scots.²⁹

Scot's antipathy toward Leicester may also account for his scathing attack on an earlier work in support of witchcraft belief and witch-hunting written by one Richard Galis of Windsor, a book which he derided as 'horrible', 'foolish', and the work of a 'madman'.³⁰ Galis was the son of Richard Galis (d. 1574), a figure of some importance, both locally and nationally, a puritan MP and, in all probability,

orders', notes the passage alluding to T. E. cited above but fails to make the connection with Elkes. Consequently, he almost certainly errs in suggesting that Elkes' reprieve was effected by a Catholic intercessor at court: G. Parry, *The Arch-Conjuror of England: John Dee* (New Haven, CT and London, 2011), 208–10, 136–7.

²⁹ Scot, *Discoverie*, 166; [H. Howard], *A Defensative against the Poyson of Supposed Prophecies* (London, 1583); J. Bossy, *Giordano Bruno and the Embassy Affair* (London, 1991), 100–1. Howard's work was dedicated to Walsingham. For Howard's checkered career as an Elizabethan courtier, see *ODNB*, sub Howard, Henry, earl of Northumberland. The suggestion that Scot was aiming to discredit Leicester by incriminating prominent members of his circle such as Dee with the taint of using illicit and fraudulent magic is given further credence by Scot's dogged attempts to locate manuscripts once in the possession of Leicester's 'servant', Thomas Elkes. Elkes had claimed in his letter of March 1583 that he had left a manuscript work by one Sir John Malborne at Slaugham in Sussex. Scot subsequently made repeated attempts to retrieve the work as it apparently exposed all conjuration as cheating. However, despite his best efforts, the rector of Slaugham refused to lend it to Scot, 'albeit a friend of mine, being knight of the shire would have given his word for the restitution of the same safe and sound': Scot, *Discoverie*, 479. While it is impossible to say with any certainty, Scot's contact in Sussex was probably Sir Walter Covert (1543–1631), a prominent figure in county government, who held the advowson of the rectory of Slaugham. Unfortunately, nothing is known of the rector, Richard Browne, but it cannot have been a coincidence that shortly before Elkes' letter to Scot, John Dee paid a visit to Slaugham and the Coverts in October 1582. Dee gives no indication of the purpose of the visit in his diary, but it is not beyond the bounds of feasibility that he, too, was seeking the assistance of the Coverts in reclaiming this important, and possibly incriminating, document. Elkes may even have been acquainted with Dee, as he was said by one of his magical co-conspirators to have been familiar with Dee's house at Mortlake: E. Fenton (ed.), *The Diaries of John Dee* (Charlbury, 1998), 47; TNA, SP 12/186, fo. 183r. For the long-serving magisterial career of Sir Walter Covert, who, despite coming from an old Catholic family, was an indefatigable opponent of Catholicism, see M. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c.1550–1640* (Cambridge, 2006), 43, 51, 175, 205.

³⁰ Scot, *Discoverie*, 10, 17, 24, 176; [R. Galis], *A Brief Treatise Conteyning the Most Strange and Horrible Crueltye of Elizabeth Stile alias Bockingham & hir Confederates Executed at Abington upon Richard Galis* (London, 1579). For a modern edition of this rare tract, see M. Gibson (ed.), *Early Modern Witches: Witchcraft Cases in Contemporary Writing* (London and New York, 2000), 50–71.

a member of the earl of Leicester's entourage.³¹ The work in question was published in 1579 and was clearly intended as a belated attempt by Galis to rehabilitate his own reputation and standing within the town of Windsor. The women whom Galis had implicated many years earlier for practising witchcraft on him and his father were the subject of official action in 1579 when the Privy Council, alarmed by reports that the Queen was the target of a group of witches based at Windsor, ordered a thorough investigation into the affair. The enquiry at Windsor, which resulted in the execution of four women at Abingdon, was in fact part of a wider panic at the heart of government initiated in 1578 following the discovery of three wax images depicting the Queen and two of her privy councillors (including Leicester) in Lincoln's Inn Fields.³² Leicester was put in charge (or put himself in charge) of the investigation and was responsible for the subsequent prosecution and torture of those suspected of using witchcraft against the Queen. In the event, it is not surprising perhaps that Scot's own citation of these events as further evidence of the lack of real threat posed by witches was couched in suitably diplomatic tones.³³

In alluding to the government inquiry into seditious witchcraft begun in 1578, which triggered further and related investigations over the next four years, Scot cited as his source the preface to a recent edition of Jean Bodin's *Démonomanie*.³⁴ If

³¹ Galis' father, Richard (c.1505–1574), was three times mayor of the borough of Windsor, which he also represented as MP in 1563–67 and 1572–74: P. W. Hasler (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1558–1603*, 3 vols (London, 1981), i, 163; E. Ashmole, *The Antiquities of Berkshire*, 3 vols (London, 1719), iii, 70. In 1563, he was responsible for initiating a contentious debate on the succession in the House of Commons. Nine years later, Galis Snr encroached yet further into controversial territory when he promoted a debate on Mary, Queen of Scots. Given the earl of Leicester's close ties with Windsor (he was made high steward of the borough on 9 September 1563, Galis as mayor signing the patent) and Galis' pronounced Protestant evangelism in Parliament, Galis has unsurprisingly been put forward as one of the earl's men of business in the Commons; see, for example, S. Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (New York, 1996), 61, 64. The link between the two men has been questioned, however, by Simon Adams, who has sought to downplay the earl's image as a political patron both in and outside Parliament: S. Adams, *Leicester and the Court: Essays on Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester, 2002), 104–6, 206, 214.

³² *APC*, vol. 10 (1577–78), 309, 322, 326.

³³ Scot pointedly wrote that 'if such bables could have brought those matters of mischeefe to passe, by the hands of traitors, witches, or papists; we should long since have been deprived of the most excellent jewell and comfort that we enjoy in this world [i.e. the Queen]: Scot, *Discoverie*, 474–5. Nonetheless, the memory of these events, and the real threat they posed to the realm, lived long in the minds of Windsor's ruling elite. In 1587, Edward Hake, mayor of Windsor, used the occasion of the Queen's birthday to revive memories of the early years of her reign and to remind his audience of a time when the country was beset on all sides by threats and dangers, including 'the oppositions of Traytors, the overthwartings of Rebells, the chaunting of Witches, the charmings of Sorcerers, the presagings and foretellings of Soothsayers, the seducing of Jesuits and Seminaries, the conspyrings of domesticall Hypocrites and Traitors, the bandings of Popish foreyne Princes, and the cursings of the Pope himself that Antychrist most accursed': Edward Hake, *An Oration conteyning an expostulation as well with the Queenes Highnesse faithfull subjects for their want of due consideration of Gods blessings enjoyed by meanes of her Maiestie* (London, 1587), B4r.

³⁴ Scot was using the Latin edition of Bodin's work on witchcraft published in 1581. For this, and other vital information surrounding the background to the publication of Scot's *Discoverie*, I am indebted to Pierre Kapitaniak, who is currently preparing a French translation of the latter work. I am particularly grateful for the opportunity to read his draft introduction to that work, in which he suggests that it was John Dee, rather than his patron the earl of Leicester, who was the chief target of

the pro-puritan earl of Leicester was the covert, political target of Scot's work on witchcraft, there is little doubt that Scot saw Bodin as the chief obstacle to a more humane approach to the witch problem. Such a conjecture, linking the earl and Bodin, may not have been entirely coincidental. Bodin had visited England in 1579, when he probably encountered Leicester and first became aware of the plot by a group of sorcerers to kill the Queen and her two counsellors. He returned in 1581–82 when, as secretary to the duke of Alençon, suitor to the Queen, and celebrated in his own right as an intellectual and author, he was warmly received at court. It is inconceivable that he did not meet the earl of Leicester on this occasion. He certainly encountered the royal magician and Leicester's protégé, John Dee, who entertained him in the royal presence chamber at Westminster in February 1581.³⁵ Bodin was clearly well informed about events in England. In the preface to the first edition of the *Démonomanie* (1581), he alluded to the story of the 'conjuring preest' of Islington, whose arrest in 1578 for making wax images of the Queen and her two counsellors was to trigger a prolonged search for treacherous sorcerers by the government under the direction of Leicester. During his stay in 1581–82, he may also have been instrumental in triggering a bout of witch-hunting in Essex. In 1582, Brian Darcy (d.1587), the examining magistrate in the trial of fourteen witches at St Osyth in Essex, alluded to Bodin when he informed one of the suspects:

there is a man of great cunning and knowledge come over lately unto our Queenes Majestie, which hath advertised her what a companie and number of Witches be within Englande: whereupon I and other of her Justices have received Commission for the apprehending of as many as are within these limites, and they which doe confesse the truth of their doings, they shall have much favour: but the other they shall be burnt and hanged.³⁶

It was the threat implied by this statement that some have seen as the catalyst for Scot's decision to publish on witchcraft. If so, it is worth speculating further as to the precise nature of the special 'commission' that had been set up by the government, at the behest of Bodin, in order to root out witches in Essex. It just so happens that immediately prior to these events the focus of the original investigation into the activities of treasonous sorcerers in London had shifted to Essex, where a number of the conspirators linked to Scot's informant Thomas Elkes were based. The original investigation in 1578 had clearly begun as an attempt by Leicester to discredit

Scot's ire: see R. Scot, *La Sorcellerie Demystifiée*, ed. P. Kapitaniak and J. Migrenne (Grenoble, 2015). These themes are further developed in his 'Reginald Scot and the Circles of Power: Witchcraft, Anti-Catholicism and Faction Politics', in Harmes and Bladen (eds), *Supernatural and Secular Power in Early Modern England*, 41–66.

³⁵ L. F. Dean, 'Bodin's *Methodus* in England before 1625', *Studies in Philology*, 39 (1942), 160–1; Fenton (ed.), *Diaries of John Dee*, 12.

³⁶ W. W., *A True and Just Recorde of the Information, Examination and Confession of All the Witches, taken at S. Oses in the Countie of Essex* (London, 1582), B6v. For the debt of this and other passages in the pamphlet, which may have been written by the examining magistrate, Brian Darcy, to Bodin's *Démonomanie* (with corresponding page references), see Gibson (ed.), *Early Modern Witches*, 72; P. Almond, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot and The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 2011), 18.

English Catholics through the taint of using sorcery to commit high treason against the Queen and so push religious moderates toward his own more militant brand of Protestantism. Aided in these aims by his acolyte and client John Dee, various suspects were rounded up and tortured, though few confessed.³⁷ By 1580, Leicester's net had widened and others, including Elkes, now found themselves accused of conjuring and related treasonous activities. In late November 1580, Elkes and four co-conspirators were arraigned before King's Bench, where all were found guilty, but only one, William Randall, was executed. It was at this point that the focus of the government's investigation shifted to Essex and neighbouring parts. Randall was from Ipswich, while three others—Thomas Luffkin, Robert Spacy, and Constance Waddington—hailed respectively from Dedham, Southminster, and Chelmsford in Essex. In addition to these five defendants, the Privy Council also received reports from a local magistrate Lord Rich that others had been examined in the county, including one Nicholas Johnson (d. 1611), the rector of Woodham Mortimer, who was accused of making a wax figure of the Queen at the Saracen's Head in nearby Maldon.³⁸ The following year, yet further arrests were made in Essex, where the earl's inquisitors secured John Browning of Peldon, near Colchester, who was accused of making a wax image to destroy Lord Burghley and the earl of Leicester.³⁹ At the same time, the authorities were informed by the condemned traitor and conjuror William Randall of links between his co-conspirators and a man called Robert Mantell, from Maldon, who in 1578 had been indicted at the assizes for claiming to be Edward VI. He subsequently escaped, was rearrested, and then executed in 1581, but not before he had been implicated along with Elkes, Spacy, and others with dabbling in alchemy, sorcery, and witchcraft.⁴⁰

³⁷ Parry, *Arch-Conjuror of England*, 208–10. One of Elkes' co-accused, Thomas Luffkyn of Dedham, had been imprisoned in Essex since the summer of 1579: J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records. Essex Indictments Elizabeth I* (London, 1978), 189, 194.

³⁸ *APC*, vol. 12 (1580–81), 23–4, 34, 251–2. Johnson was vicar of Maldon from 1563 to 1566, a post he resigned to take up the living of Woodham Mortimer. He remained landlord of the Saracen's Head in Maldon, where, it was alleged, he had constructed a wax image of the Queen: W. J. Petchey, *A Prospect of Maldon 1500–1689* (Chelmsford, 1991), 197. Johnson's co-accused, Thomas Glascock, may have been the Chelmsford shoemaker of that name who was later indicted in 1586 for 'depraving' the Book of Common Prayer: Cockburn (ed.), *Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, 287.

³⁹ *APC*, vol. 13 (1581–82), 80. Browning had previously been arrested (by Lord Darcy, father of the dedicatee of *W. W.'s True and Just Recorde*) in 1578 for false coining: *APC*, vol. 10 (1577–78), 201, 202–3, 212, 222, 234, 247, 267, 268. One of the co-accused was the physician Marcellus Goodwin (d. 1606), who was later active in identifying witches in 1599: A. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (London, 1970), 200.

⁴⁰ TNA, SP 12/186, fos 221–5; Cockburn (ed.), *Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, 175, 191–2, 215; *APC*, vol. 10 (1577–78), 146, 148, 154, 157, 223; *APC*, vol. 11 (1578–80), 371; *APC*, vol. 12 (1580–81), 29, 353–4; *CSPD, 1581–1590*, 309. Mantell's case has strange echoes in a number of other trials held in Essex at about this time. In 1579, two Essex men were indicted for claiming that the earls of Warwick and Leicester had murdered Edward VI: *APC*, vol. 11 (1578–80), 78, 108; Cockburn (ed.), *Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, 191. A year later, Thomas Playfere of Maldon was indicted for treason for asserting, among other things, that he had seen two children, the offspring of the Queen and earl of Leicester, being shipped out of the country: *ibid.*, 195. Finally, in 1584 Edmund Mansell, clerk, was accused of practising witchcraft upon fellow clergyman Edward Burges, rector of Wivenhoe and vicar of Feering, Essex. Two years later Burges was indicted for claiming in the pulpit that he was the son of Henry VIII and sister to the Queen: *ibid.*, 253, 287.

While it is impossible to say with any certainty, it seems highly probable that the 'commission' cited in the St Osyth pamphlet was one and the same as that promoted by Leicester and the Privy Council in 1580. Robert Rich, second Baron Rich (c.1537–1581), who conducted the enquiry in Essex, was a zealous puritan with strong links to Leicester. His son and heir, Robert, first earl of Warwick (1559–1619), who shared his father's passion for militant Protestantism, was Leicester's godson. If this supposition is correct, then it suggests that the author of the St Osyth pamphlet had confused, possibly deliberately, the date of the original government commission in order to legitimate Darcy's actions as a witchfinder. The trials may also have been a by-product of the original investigation, as well as an attempt by Leicester to shift the focus of attention away from treasure-hunting and treasonous sorcerers and conjurors, who, if certain well-informed Catholic writers are to be believed, may have been the cause of some embarrassment to Leicester and his circle. In 1582—the year of the St Osyth trials and Bodin's visit to England—the English Jesuit Robert Parsons (1546–1610) made the intriguing claim that Leicester's original investigation into suspected Catholic involvement in sorcery and treason was 'huysht sodainlie' when it was discovered that the leader of the plot, a Protestant minister, had 'diverse complices & accessaries whiche were verie zealous gospellers'. A few years later, another Catholic polemicist Richard Verstegan alleged that it was none other than the Protestant Thomas Elkes, who 'confessed himself to have bin the doer there of: yet not to destroy the Queene, but to obtaine the love of some Londoners wyf'.⁴¹

While the evidence, as it stands, is largely circumstantial, it strongly suggests that the earl of Leicester was the principal figure at the centre of government obsessed with the threat posed to the Queen by treasonous sorcerers, and that he had most to gain from promoting, and possibly fabricating, the allegations then made against papist witches. In his haste, however, to discredit English Catholics (especially important given the marriage negotiations then taking place with the French duke of Alençon), he seems to have accidentally stirred a hornet's nest by uncovering activity of an equally dubious nature closer to home. Leicester, of course, via John Dee and others, had strong connections with the occult underworld of Elizabethan England, sharing an interest in alchemy and related matters with others, like Cecil, at the heart of government. When some of those close to the earl, like Elkes, became caught up in the original proceedings against Catholic sorcerers and plotters, political necessity dictated a policy of discreet withdrawal. In all probability, Elkes took on the role of fall guy and was subsequently pardoned, though his decision to write to Scot suggests that, in the changed circumstances of early 1583, he too, like Scot, may have detected a sea change in the balance of power at the

⁴¹ R. Parsons, *An Epistle of the Persecution of Catholickes in England* (Rouen, 1582), 148–9; R. Verstegan, *The Copy of a Letter Lately Written by a Spanish Gentleman* (1589), 7. A marginal note in the former work identifies the minister, Thomas Harding, racked and condemned to death as a Catholic, as pastor at Newington. Elsewhere, he is said to be minister of Islington. In the minutes of the Privy Council, he may be referred to as Thomas Hardlowe, schoolmaster to the children of Thomas Gardiner, late chirographer in the Common Pleas. Gardiner was then in disgrace for having defrauded the Queen of £30,000 and failing to pay back the money: *APC*, vol. 12 (1580–81), 26.

centre of government. In the meantime, official proscription and fear of witchcraft found an outlet in the prosecution of a group of harmless old women in Essex, a county with which the inquisitors were more than familiar given the origins of many of Elkes' co-accused.⁴²

The contemporary reaction to Scot's *Discoverie* was strangely muted.⁴³ Significantly perhaps in the light of the preceding discussion, one of the few works to address Scot was penned by the eminent Oxford theologian John Rainolds (1549–1607), a prominent supporter of the puritan cause with strong connections to the earl of Leicester. Some time after 1588, Rainolds, in a series of lectures aimed at undermining the attempt by the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) to authenticate the Apocrypha, devoted one *praelectio* to refuting Scot's interpretation of Samuel's appearance before Saul at Endor (1 Samuel 28:7–20).⁴⁴ Scot's profound scepticism in relation to witches and demons was probably shared by few of his contemporaries, though his influence can be seen in the growing opposition among senior figures in the Church to the prosecution of witches and those who claimed a special dispensation to exorcize the possessed. This is most evident in the citation of his work by prominent clerics such as Samuel Harsnet (1561–1631), a protégé of Richard Bancroft, bishop of London, who consistently sought to expose the alleged frauds perpetrated by puritan exorcists such as John Darrell in the 1590s.⁴⁵ Scot's rejection of witchcraft and Harsnet's assault on Darrell were rooted in the Protestant idea that all miracles had ceased shortly

⁴² There is little doubt that the earl was badly compromised by these developments. In 1584, the year in which Scot published the *Discoverie* and Leicester's fortunes began to dip, an anonymous attack on the earl, penned by Catholic enemies, pointedly referred to his patronage of poisoners and conjurers who, it was alleged, were used by the earl to procure love potions and philtres (cf. Elkes above). Moreover, in the same work there is a tantalizing suggestion that Sir Henry Neville (c.1520–1593) was privy to Leicester's plan to marry the Queen and assume the role of king. Neville, a loyal client of the earl who served as his under constable at Windsor Castle, had played a key role, following instructions from London, in arresting and examining the witches of Windsor in 1579: *Leicester's Commonwealth. The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents*, ed. D. C. Peck (Athens, OH, 1985), 58–9, 60, 62, 63, 79–80, 86–7, 125; Galis, *Brief Treatise*, C2r, C4r; Anon., *A Rehearsall both Straung and True, of Hainous and Horrible Actes ... at Winsore in the Countie of Barks* (London, 1579).

⁴³ For a recent overview, which is largely concerned with tracing the impact of the later editions of Scot's work on witchcraft and its appeal to mid-seventeenth-century religious radicals, see S. Davies, 'The Reception of Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*: Witchcraft, Magic, and Radical Religion', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 74 (2013), 381–401.

⁴⁴ J. Rainolds, *Censura Librorum Apocryphorum Veteris Testamenti*, 2 vols (Oppenheim, 1611), cols 1147–62 [*praelectio* 94]. Rainolds had been supported by the earl of Leicester as candidate for the vacant presidency of Corpus Christi in 1579. He dedicated his *The Summe of The Conference* (London, 1584), a disputation with the condemned English Catholic John Hart, to Leicester. Rainolds later assumed the leadership of the puritan party in Oxford, participating in Presbyterian meetings there in the 1580s: see *ODNB*, sub Rainolds, John.

⁴⁵ Interestingly, the two clergymen, John Deacon and John Walker, who led the assault upon Darrell, cited Scot in a section of their work devoted to casting doubt upon the real nature of demon possession with specific reference to Scot's analysis of Samuel's appearance before Saul at Endor: John Deacon and John Walker, *Dialogicall Discourses of Spirits and Divels* (London, 1601), 125. Equally intriguing is the fact that Deacon and Walker appear to mis-cite Scot (*ibid.*, 104), a fault that equally applied to John Rainolds. Both works misattribute specific passages in the *Discoverie* (the latter even refers to it by a different name, 'detect'), raising the possibility that they may have both read a hitherto unnoticed edition.

after the death of Christ and the establishment of the earliest Christian churches. Such views were fully consistent with the social and religious conservatism of leading clergymen such as Whitgift, Bancroft, Aylmer, and Harsnet, who shared Scot's fear of the general disorder that might accompany the hunt for witches and sorcerers.⁴⁶

While others may not have shared his radical rejection of the reality of witchcraft, many nonetheless grew wary of witch-hunting, which, like Scot, they saw as destructive of social and religious harmony. The Lincolnshire preacher Francis Trigge (d.1606), for example, shared Scot's intuition in perceiving a link between the rise of witch-hunting and the decline of charity in the English countryside. In 1594 he published a scathing attack on usurers, enclosers, and other proto-capitalists whom he accused of destroying the peace and harmony of rural communities. Citing various examples culled from the work of Bodin, Trigge asserted that witches held no power over those who gave liberally to the poor, arguing that charitable giving 'is the surest, and most Christian remedy against witchcraft'. While he did not deny the existence of witches per se, Trigge undoubtedly believed, like Scot, that witchcraft accusations were the product of new socio-economic relations in the rural economy that generated high degrees of guilt and anxiety, which in turn threatened to disturb traditional notions of 'good neighbourliness'.⁴⁷ Similar fears surrounding the impact of witch beliefs and witch-hunting on English rural communities can be seen in the life and work of another Elizabethan cleric, William Harrison (1535–1593). In 1579 it was claimed that in his absence Harrison's son had succumbed to the wiles of a local witch, but on his return had rapidly recovered.⁴⁸ Harrison's biographer, Glyn Parry, has seen in this

⁴⁶ For a recent reappraisal of Bancroft's role in the Darrell affair, which largely reinforces the importance of the bishop's anti-puritanism in exposing the fraudulent nature of puritan exorcisms, see P. Collinson, *Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism* (Cambridge, 2013), 148–72.

⁴⁷ F. Trigge, *A Godly and Fruitfull Sermon Preached at Grantham, Anno. Dom. 1592* (Oxford, 1594), F3v–F4v. Usury and witchcraft were likewise linked by the puritan preacher Richard Rogers (1551–1618), who argued that usury and oppression had 'no place in the Church of God, nor the Christian Commonwealth: the Lawmaker having said of both, as of Witchcraft & of idolatrie, there shall be none such in Israel, that is, among Gods people': R. Rogers, *Seven Treatises Containing Such Directions as is Gathered out of the Holie Scriptures* (London, 1603), 181. Unlike Trigge, however, he would appear to have placed much less emphasis on charitable giving as a sign of election, arguing instead that those who gave generously to the poor but lacked true zeal were 'further off . . . from the kingdome of Heaven' than those who neglected the 'duties of mercy' but who delighted in hearing the preaching of the word of God: R. Rogers, *The Practice of Christianitie* (London, 1623), 219–20. The link made by educated men such as Trigge between witchcraft and the changing patterns of almsgiving in the late Tudor economy was also seemingly shared by some of those at the mercy of the new Poor Law and the social relations it engendered. In 1598 a Kent labourer was indicted at the assizes for saying that 'yf the Queene did put downe begging she is worse than Nan Bennett . . . which forsooke God and all the world'. Agnes Bennett, of Boughton Monchelsea, was hanged for witchcraft in 1566: Cockburn (ed.), *Kent Indictments Elizabeth I*, 71, 423.

⁴⁸ Anon., *A Detection of Damnable Driftes, Practized by Three Witches Arraigned at Chelmsforde in Essex, at the Laste Assizes there holden, whiche were Executed in Aprill. 1579* (London, 1579), Br-v. Interestingly, the pamphlet account does not refer to Harrison by name, nor was the suspected witch, Margery Stanton, prosecuted for this incident, strongly suggesting that Harrison was not supportive of the trial. The trial itself—Stanton was indicted for bewitching horses and livestock—was probably typical of many at this time. Having been refused charity by various parishioners, including John Cornell, patron of Harrison's living, Stanton was accused of wreaking her revenge on the animals and

incident a typical example of what he describes as Harrison's profound faith in 'his spiritual freedom from the fear of witchcraft'. Again, while Harrison did not reject belief in witchcraft per se, like Scot he was thoroughly sceptical of popular beliefs concerning the ability of witches to kill and maim which he ascribed to 'popish superstitions' and their continuing influence on an unregenerate population.⁴⁹ At the same time, like Scot, he began to abandon his earlier commitment to a programme of puritanical reform in the Church, opting to reject Presbyterianism and support the Whitgiftian reaction alongside his long-standing patron William Brooke, Lord Cobham (1527–1597).⁵⁰

PURITANISM AND WITCHCRAFT: THE CASE OF PRE-CIVIL WAR ESSEX

If my analysis of the genesis of Scot's work on witchcraft is correct, then it would appear to provide support for those who have long suspected a close link between puritanism and witch-hunting. On the surface, there is much to commend this hypothesis. As Jim Sharpe in his magisterial survey of English witchcraft has noted, the learned debate about demonology was largely dominated by 'puritan clerical intellectuals', a natural by-product of the 'puritan emphasis on humankind's sinfulness, and the need for warfare against the devil', which in turn created an imperative to 'destroy the witch, who had, in their eyes, broken her baptismal covenant with God and had thus become an affront and a threat to the well-ordered godly commonwealth'.⁵¹ Sharpe, nonetheless, remains wary of adopting such a formula, arguing instead for a more guarded approach based on the inconclusive nature of much of the surviving evidence. There is much to commend this approach. Sharpe's stress on the existence in Protestant circles of a diverse, and often contradictory, range of explanations for diabolism and witchcraft may well help to explain why there was no broad consensus on this subject. In the remainder

children of those who had spurned her requests: Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, 81–2, 138; G. Parry, *A Protestant Vision: William Harrison and the Reformation of Elizabethan England* (Cambridge, 1987), 160.

⁴⁹ In 1587 Harrison, more widely known for his contribution to the history of England in the updated edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* in that year, expressed contempt for such beliefs which he derided as 'the toies that superstition hath brought into our husband-mens heads': [R. Holinshed], *The First and Second Volume of Chronicles . . . The Description of England* (London, 1587), 110. For the typicality of this case, which Scot ascribed to guilt and scapegoating, see K. V. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971), 554–5. Scot was also a contributor to the 1587 edition of Holinshed, which was published by his regular printer, Henry Denham.

⁵⁰ Parry, *Protestant Vision*, 157–8, 160–1. The connection with Lord Cobham is particularly intriguing as he was one of the principal figures in the government of Kent at this time where, for almost twenty years, he promoted the cause of Lord Burghley in opposition to the earl of Leicester. Harrison would appear to have shared his patron's dislike of Leicester, which Parry has seen as extreme, even by the standards of the age: *ibid.*, 271–3; Clark, *English Provincial Society*, 128–9.

⁵¹ J. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550–1750* (London, 1996), 239–41. For earlier exponents of the view linking puritanism and witchcraft, see G. L. Burr, *Selections from His Writings*, ed. L. O. Gibbons (Ithaca, NY, 1943), 360–2; R. Trevor-Davies, *Four Centuries of Witch Beliefs* (London, 1947); and M. Walzer, 'Puritanism as a Revolutionary Ideology', *History and Theory*, 3 (1963), 59–60.

of this chapter, I hope to explore some aspects of this problem, particularly the all-important relationship of puritanism to witchcraft, in an attempt to produce a more nuanced account of the function of such beliefs in Protestant circles prior to the outbreak of civil war in England in 1642.

The evidence in favour of a link between puritanical evangelism and support for demonology and witch-hunting is perhaps most evident in relation to the series of exorcisms, some well documented, others less so, that were performed by puritan ministers in England around the turn of the century. These episodes have received wide coverage from scholars, who have all stressed the extent to which they formed part of a much larger and vitriolic debate in ecclesiastical circles over the nature and future direction of the Anglican Church. Put simply, they would appear to agree with Michael MacDonald's verdict on the Mary Glover affair (1602–03) that it represented, in miniature, 'a confrontation between Puritan believers and Anglican sceptics' that would inform the course of the debate over witchcraft for the rest of the seventeenth century. While not wishing to refute the suggestion that the issue of public exorcisms, and the related phenomenon of witchcraft (and it is worth bearing in mind that most of these cases of dispossession involved accusations against witches), was in danger of becoming appropriated by partisan religious disputants in this period, we need to tread carefully here before validating a simple dichotomy between credulity/puritanism and scepticism/Anglicanism. In the first place it is desperately difficult to feel confident about applying simplistic labels of this kind to the rapidly changing and complex patterns of religious affiliation in this period. As many specialists in this field have noted, 'Puritan' and 'Anglican' were not necessarily diametrically opposed positions, as many 'puritans' (or those desiring further godly reform in the doctrine and practice of the Church of England), regardless of their differences, wished to remain firmly within the safe confines of the national Church, just as many of their reform-minded 'Anglican' colleagues often proved sympathetic to the aspirations of their godly brethren. In addition, individuals to whom these labels have often been applied frequently changed their minds and shifted allegiance, some moving in the direction of conformity while others became further radicalized and drifted towards outright separation. Reginald Scot was not alone in repudiating his former attachment to the more militant Protestantism advocated by early Elizabethan puritans. No less a figure than the martyrologist John Foxe (1517–1587), who, it should be noted, combined a zeal for evangelical reform with a fledgling career as an exorcist in the 1570s, followed Scot's lead in the following decade by renouncing former links with the puritan cause and signalling a willingness to compromise with the religious status quo established by Archbishop Whitgift.⁵²

A second factor that needs to be borne in mind when examining the role of puritanism in fomenting belief in witchcraft and witch trials relates to what I see as the marked ambivalence of puritan thinking throughout this period to issues surrounding good governance and social order. Much scholarship on this subject has

⁵² ODNB, sub Foxe, John; K. R. Sands, 'John Foxe: Exorcist', *History Today*, 51 (2001), 37–43; Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 257.

tended to characterize puritanism as inherently confrontational and divisive, a natural product of the Calvinist emphasis on the bipartite division between the cosmic forces of good and evil where there were 'no neutrals [and] no spectators'. William Hunt, for example, has stressed how this type of thinking informed the puritans' attempt to impose their own distinctive 'culture of discipline' upon pre-civil war Essex in place of 'the culture of neighborhood and good fellowship' that, by and large, prevailed for much of the previous century.⁵³ It would appear to follow that communities ruled in this way would be far more likely to identify witches, as well as a host of other offenders and moral degenerates such as drunkards and fornicators, whose mere existence threatened to bring down the wrath of God on the rest of the inhabitants. But is this what happened in practice, and were these concerns the sole prerogative of puritanical ministers and magistrates? Here the evidence is much less clear. Tom Webster, for example, in his study of the 'godly clergy' of pre-civil war Essex, has detected contrary impulses within the puritan community of preachers, contrasting the peaceable nature of the pastoral work of John Rogers (c.1570–1636) at Dedham with the much more divisive approach to parochial affairs adopted by his colleague Thomas Hooker (1586–1647).⁵⁴ It is equally apparent that the policy of applying 'strong Physick' to sinful communities as favoured by puritan moralists such as Hooker often differed little from the kind of approach favoured by supporters of the established Church in the war against puritan dissidents. The Laudian Robert Aylett (c.1583–1654), for example, who acted as commissary of Essex in the 1630s, referred to his work in rooting out religious dissidents as akin to that of the physician forced to give physic in the spring in order to quell the 'stirring of rebellious humours'.⁵⁵ It is also worth bearing in mind that the surviving records of the secular and ecclesiastical courts of pre-civil war England are replete with examples of conformable clergy prosecuted for fomenting bitterness and hostility among their

⁵³ W. Hunt, *The Puritan Moment: The Coming of Revolution in an English County* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 139–43, 154–5. Hunt's view of puritanism, which echoes that of Walzer in seeing it as fundamentally radical in tone and intent, is neatly captured in his comment that 'Puritans not only accepted conflict, they welcomed it... In fact the absence of strife was a very bad sign... One consequence of this metaphysic of strife was the conflation of the most disparate attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours into one great hypostasis of evil. Puritans saw the hand of Satan... in virtually everything of which they disapproved, from the Spanish Inquisition to the dirty joke.' He later adds witches for good measure: *ibid.*, 154–5. Such attitudes were almost certainly underpinned by what Peter Lake has perceived as the puritan preoccupation with a form of discourse founded on binary oppositions and reasoning from contraries—the same in fact that Stuart Clark has detected at the heart of so much thinking on witchcraft: see P. Lake, 'Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice', in R. Cust and A. Hughes (eds), *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603–1642* (London and New York, 1989), 73.

⁵⁴ T. Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c. 1620–1643* (Cambridge, 1997), 99–101.

⁵⁵ TNA, SP 16/350/54 [Aylett to Sir John Lambe, 21 March 1636/7]. Aylett was careful, however, not to press the analogy too far, arguing that it would be wise to abate the 'cupping' of the body politic for '[i]t is dangerous to purge out all together lest wee weaken to [sic] much ye Body'. For Aylett, who served as a member of the Court of High Commission along with his well-connected cousin, Sir John Lambe, see J. H. Round, 'Dr Robert Aylett', *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, 10 (1906–08), 26–34.

congregations. Puritanism was not, therefore, synonymous with conflict; nor did its exponents monopolize the rhetoric of the moral crusade.⁵⁶

In fact, the county of Essex, which would appear to have generated a disproportionate number of witch trials in the period, provides numerous examples that undermine the image of puritanism as responsible for generating communal division and thus, by extension, witch-hunting. Alan Macfarlane, of course, reached a similar conclusion more than forty years ago when he failed to find any concrete evidence linking the prosecution of witches with evangelical Protestant fervour. He did, however, detect a superficial connection between the two based on a chronological correlation between periods of intense witch-hunting and militant puritan evangelism (in particular the 1580s and 1640s). What is missing, however, from Macfarlane's analysis is any attempt to recover the specific local circumstances, particularly those relating to religious and political tensions, which may have shaped the genesis and outcome of witch trials.⁵⁷ Detailed study of some of the many cases of witchcraft identified by Macfarlane is highly illuminating. My own survey strongly suggests that Macfarlane was right to downplay the role of both puritan ministers and laymen in the prosecution of witches, but wrong to exculpate them entirely from this process. Despite his own reservations as to the possibility of recovering the religious proclivities of those who accused their neighbours of witchcraft, the extant archival records do contain a great deal of evidence in relation to this particular issue. Puritan laymen, for example, did participate in witch trials, both as victims and witnesses. They included prominent figures such as Andrew Brownsmith of Colchester, whose wife Helen was killed by a witch in the town in 1585. Brownsmith served as a lay reader in the town's churches for over twenty years, having been appointed by John Pulleyne (d.1565), the first Protestant minister in the borough, as part of a strategy designed to promote urban godliness in the wake of a clerical shortage following the Reformation.⁵⁸ The involvement of puritan laymen in witch trials was not restricted to the large towns and corporations. John Courtman, a resident of the small village of Tollesbury in the north-east of the county, is a case in point. In 1599 Courtman, acting as parish constable,

⁵⁶ For a recent survey of relations between puritans and non-puritans in pre-civil war England, based largely on church court records, which acknowledges the existence of tensions and divisions but also notes their exceptional nature, see C. Haigh, *The Plain Man's Pathways to Heaven: Kinds of Christianity in Post-Reformation England* (Oxford, 2007), 122–41.

⁵⁷ Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 186–9. I am conscious in what follows of attempting to heed the advice of Stuart Clark, who has called for more detailed investigation of the moral climate surrounding individual witch trials, 'an aspect of their aetiology that has hitherto been neglected in favour of the more concrete mechanisms governing the function of societies in which they occur': S. Clark, *Thinking With Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), 380. I should add that I am currently in the process of constructing a database of all known cases of witchcraft in England, including reference to the broader context in which individual accusations and trials took place.

⁵⁸ Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 299–300; M. Byford, 'The Birth of a Protestant Town: The Process of Reformation in Tudor Colchester, 1530–80', in P. Collinson and J. Craig (eds), *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500–1640* (Basingstoke, 1998), 38. The timing of this case is particularly suggestive as this and related trials took place against the background of the recent deprivation of the puritan lecturer at Colchester, George Northey: Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 256–7.

was responsible for ensuring the appearance of a local witch before the quarter sessions. Courtman was an active puritan with a long record of opposition to the lukewarm brand of Protestantism provided by the various incumbents of his parish. In 1584, for example, in a survey of Essex clergy undertaken in the aftermath of Whitgift's campaign against puritanism, he stigmatized the curate of Tollesbury as an alehouse haunter, companion of drunkards, and 'a gross abuser of the scriptures'.⁵⁹ Over twenty years later, in 1607, Courtman again went on the offensive when he confronted his own vicar in the parish church for allowing a visiting preacher, whom he described as 'a rascall fellow', to preach 'against the King by preaching against puritans'. He went on to explain, in words that speak eloquently of the conformist mindset of many puritans at this time, that the new king was a puritan, whom he confidently expected to initiate a series of reforms in the Church, including a diminution of the powers of the bishops.⁶⁰

There can be little doubt that in some parishes, where puritan ministers strove to impose the 'new culture of discipline' that many have seen as the hallmark of the puritan movement, there was a marked tendency for those in authority to prosecute their neighbours for witchcraft or the related offence of seeking out witches. This is evident for example in the parish of Great Coggeshall, which witnessed numerous cases of witchcraft, both in the church courts and at the assizes, between 1589 and 1609. The parish itself had undergone puritan evangelization in the 1570s and 1580s under the charismatic and fiery lecturer William Dyke (d.1608), assisted by the resident vicar Lawrence Newman (c.1546–1600), who served as pastor there from 1576 until his death in 1600. Newman was a leading figure in the proto-Presbyterian classis that met at Dedham throughout this period and was briefly suspended for exhibiting scruples over wearing the surplice in 1585.⁶¹ In 1589–90 he was almost certainly responsible for the mass presentation of various members of his parish in the court of the archdeacon for a range of offences relating to witchcraft, including the churchwardens for failing to present a known white witch accused of concocting magical ointments and cures.⁶² Among those presented for allowing their children to be healed by such a practitioner were John Wade and his wife. Wade was a typical

⁵⁹ Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 274; ERO, Q/SR 144/98, 106; 145/2; T. W. Davids, *The Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in Essex from the Time of Wycliffe to the Restoration* (London, 1863), 103. Courtman's co-accuser against the errant curate, Mr Bembridge, was one Edward Paine, who may well have been related to the minister John Paine, deprived of his living by Whitgift in 1584: *ibid.*, 115. Davids errs, however, in suggesting that this John Paine was the same as the religious firebrand, who suffered imprisonment with Thomas Cartwright in the 1590s, and was formerly minister at Hanbury in Staffordshire.

⁶⁰ ERO, D/ACA/27, fo. 206v. The vicar Mr Moody was described in a puritan survey of 1604 as a non-preaching minister. Courtman's ire in 1607 may well have been inflamed by the fact that in the same year John Horrox, the curate, was prosecuted for nonconformity at the episcopal visitation: O. U. Kalu, 'The Jacobean Church and Essex Puritans: A Regional Study of the Enforcement of Church Discipline and on the Survival of Puritan Non-Conformity, 1603–1628', PhD thesis (Toronto, 1973), 10, 241; LPL, MS 2442: 'A View of the State of the Clergie in Essex'.

⁶¹ For Newman, see especially P. Collinson, J. Craig and B. Usher (eds), *Conferences and Combination Lectures in the Elizabethan Church: Dedham and Bury St Edmunds, 1582–1590* (Woodbridge, 2003), 238–9.

⁶² Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 290; ERO, ACA/18, fo. 92v, 114v, 132v, 138v, 139.

representative of that festive culture that disciplinarians like Newman were trying to suppress and ultimately eradicate. In 1579 he had been indicted at the quarter sessions for playing cards and other unlawful games on the sabbath, as well as enticing apprentices to do the same. Fifteen years later he was again in trouble with the authorities for acting as a receiver of stolen goods.⁶³ In the eyes of men like Newman, Wade's recourse to white witches and his general immorality and lawlessness were symptomatic of the sinfulness of the times. He was certainly not alone in thinking this way. The puritan preoccupation with the threat posed to godly reformation by white witches in particular was a constant theme of puritan writing on the subject, and will be explored in more detail shortly. In the case of Newman, it almost certainly induced him to operate a policy of excluding from communion those amongst his congregation who offended in this way as well as other miscreants, creating in the process a community riven by conflict.⁶⁴ The divisions engendered by Newman's pastorate continued under his puritan successors, as did the accusations and prosecutions for witchcraft. In 1607 and again in 1609, numerous witches from Coggeshall and the surrounding hamlets were tried at the assizes. Once again, these trials coincided with a period of growing tension in the village engendered by what one historian of Essex puritanism has described as a concerted effort on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities to force the puritan curate John Waklyn to conform to the canons of 1604.⁶⁵ Great Coggeshall was certainly not the only Essex parish to exhibit high degrees of religious conflict, engendered by puritan activism, alongside witch-hunting. Similar patterns can be found in parishes such as Great Bentley,⁶⁶ Hatfield Broad Oak,⁶⁷ and, most spectacularly, at West Ham.

⁶³ ERO, Q/SR 73/64; Q/SR 135/43; F. G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts* (Chelmsford, 1973), 16.

⁶⁴ In 1595 one of Newman's parishioners complained that he had been refused communion 'through private grudges between him and Mr Newman'. The case, which came before the church courts, coincided with yet another witch trial at the assizes involving other members of Newman's congregation: ERO, D/ACA 22, fo. 195; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 263–4; Cockburn (ed.), *Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, 438–9 [trial unnoticed by Ewen, *Witch Hunting*].

⁶⁵ J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records. Essex Indictments James I* (London, 1982), 18, 62; Kalu, 'Jacobean Church', 221–2; LMA, DL/C/306, fos 29v, 158v. It is just possible that the accused witch in 1609, Mary, the wife of Edward Wade of nearby Pattiswick, may have been a relation through marriage of John Wade. Despite subsequent attempts at reconciling the differences between the minister, his parishioners, and the diocesan authorities, Coggeshall rapidly succumbed to permanent religious disaffection as attested by the emergence of a separatist movement of Barrowists and Brownists in the village in the first decade of the seventeenth century: see Kalu, 'Jacobean Church', 249; TNA, ASSI 35/34/T/22; 35/45/2/49; 35/54/1; 35/55/1/38.

⁶⁶ Great Bentley was the site of a witch scare in 1603, which ended up at the assizes. It was also a hotbed of lay puritanism. In the same year as the witch trial, numerous parishioners, including some of high social standing, were presented in the archidiaconal court for a range of 'puritanical' offences, including rejection of the traditional rite of baptism as laid down in the Book of Common Prayer as well as gadding to sermons: Cockburn (ed.), *Essex Indictments James I*, 6; Kalu, 'Jacobean Church', 90–1, 92. Thirty years later, the parish of Great Bentley witnessed the exodus of many of its inhabitants to New England: see N. C. P. Tyack, 'Migration from East Anglia to New England before 1660', PhD thesis (London, 1951), Appendix 1, lviii–lix.

⁶⁷ Hatfield Broad Oak, site of a witch panic in 1602, was an important centre of local puritanism. Home to the godly Barringtons and the puritan lecturer John Huckle or Huckles, 200 yeomen from the village and surrounding parts signed a petition in 1604 defending godly preaching in a period of

The parish of West Ham, located on the fringes of London, was the site in the early 1620s of an extraordinary attempt by its puritan vicar, Robert Jennings (d.1630), and the radical lecturer William Holbrook (d.1629) to exorcize a local woman and lay the blame for her possession on two local witches. The case, one of a number investigated personally by King James I, ultimately collapsed in farce with one of the 'dispossessed' maids facing a charge at the assizes of seeking to procure the death of one of the accused witches, Elizabeth Edlyn, by laying false claims against her before two assize judges.⁶⁸ These and related events, described in painstaking detail in a contemporary account in the court of Star Chamber, were the culmination of a long campaign of puritan activity in a parish where the defenders of ecclesiastical tradition and related festive culture resisted all attempts at godly reform. As was often the case, the church courts became a battleground between the warring factions. In 1616, for example, Holbrook complained to the archdeacon's court that a group of parishioners, led by William Ford, routinely indulged in 'drinking, swearing and singing ribald songs' on the sabbath, with Holbrook as the inevitable butt of the men's humour. Moreover, when Holbrook attempted to reprove Ford for such disgraceful behaviour, the latter was alleged to have 'bid him kiss his tail'.⁶⁹ No doubt in retaliation, constant efforts were made by some in the parish to expose the nonconformist Holbrook as a serial offender against the rites and practices of the established Church. Among other crimes, Holbrook was accused of baptizing without the sign of the cross and preaching without a licence (for which he was also called to account in various London parishes), while his associate, Robert Jennings, was presented for not wearing the surplice as early as 1607. Remarkably, the diocesan authorities repeatedly demonstrated leniency, simply admonishing the men to put all such matters right.⁷⁰ In the process, they almost certainly inflamed the situation within the parish of West Ham itself, where matters came to a head in 1621–22 with a witch panic and the dramatic intervention of the King.

repression: Cockburn (ed.), *Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, 535; Kalu, 'Jacobean Church', 188; BL, Add. MS 38,492, fo. 89.

⁶⁸ Cockburn (ed.), *Essex Indictments James I*, 251. The assize prosecution of Anne Godfrey for counterfeiting possession was unnoticed by Ewen and Macfarlane. Both, however, refer to the prosecution of Godfrey's co-accused, Katherine Malpas, before the court of Star Chamber in 1621–22: C. L. Ewen, *Witchcraft in the Star Chamber* (London, 1938), 55–6; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 301–2. For the original Star Chamber files and depositions in this case, see TNA, STAC 8/32/13. The case is discussed in R. Raiswell, 'Faking It: A Case of Counterfeit Possession in the Reign of James I', *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme*, 23 (1999), 29–48.

⁶⁹ ERO, D/AEA/29, fo. 76v.

⁷⁰ ERO, D/AEA/27, fos 218v, 303; LMA, DL/C/314, fo. 134v; BL, Sloane MS 271, fo. 73. For the nonconformity of Holbrook and Jennings, see O. U. Kalu, 'Continuity in Change: Bishops of London and Religious Dissent in Early Stuart England', *Journal of British Studies*, 18 (1978), 34 and Kalu, 'Jacobean Church', 141, 158, 218, 273. The former's subversive activities and preaching elsewhere in London, including reference to a Paul's Cross sermon in 1609 in which he lambasted those 'who delighted in vexing the godly', are discussed in P. Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships: The Politics of Religious Dissent 1560–1662* (Stanford, CA, 1970), 83–4, 199–200, 246.

It would be wrong to conclude from these examples, however, that the pattern of witch-hunting in pre-civil war Essex can be accounted for solely by the presence of an active puritan ministry. Various factors militate against any such simple conclusion. First and foremost, there is little evidence of unanimity among puritan ministers in Essex (and, as we shall see, elsewhere) as to the prevalence of witchcraft, and how it should be detected and addressed. This is painstakingly clear, for example, in the proceedings of the Dedham classis in 1588, when such issues were raised by one of the members, Edmund Salmon. The minutes note that most agreed that it was best to hand over such matters to the secular magistrate, but there was little agreement as to what constituted the appropriate method to detect a witch, some saying that 'she might be found out by serche in her bodie', while others 'thought that to be fancy in the people easilie conceiving such a thinge and to be reprov'd in them'.⁷¹ The doubts and divisions among puritans over such issues undoubtedly reflected wider clerical opinion on the subject. Whereas there has been a tendency among some historians of English witchcraft to exonerate non-puritan conformists from any involvement in witch-hunting, it is clear from the Essex records that many ministers who were decidedly unpuritanical in their outlook and behaviour were in fact active in prosecuting their neighbours and members of their own congregations for witchcraft. This is evident, for example, with regard to the involvement of various clergymen who also acted as officials in the local church courts in promoting witchcraft, where they often appeared as prosecutors, victims, and witnesses. William Denman, who acted as a surrogate in the archidiaconal court of Colchester from 1599 to 1624, gave evidence at the trial for witchcraft of one of his parishioners in 1599. As rector of Greenstead and successor to the popular puritan minister Hugo Ince (d.1617), he was frequently cited to appear before his own court by parishioners and others for neglecting his pastoral duties and overzealous use of excommunication.⁷² Fellow surrogate John Mountford, who also held the living of Radwinter, accused a fellow minister Richard Cradock of conjuring spirits in the churchyard in order to gain possession of his living in 1606.⁷³ As officials of the church courts, these men almost certainly risked the opprobrium of those whom they sought to correct on a regular basis.⁷⁴ Occasionally, they too claim to have suffered at the hands of malevolent witches. In the case of Dr John Tuer, vicar of Elsenham and surrogate for various archdeacons in Essex under the authority of Robert Aylett, the outcome proved fatal. In 1621 he appeared at the assizes as a witness in the trial of Elizabeth Parnsbye of

⁷¹ Collinson, Craig and Usher (eds), *Conferences and Combination Lectures*, 42. For Salmon, rector of Erwarton, near Ipswich, in Suffolk, see *ibid.*, 246–7. I discuss more fully puritan differences over the proper methods to be used in detecting witches below, 55–64.

⁷² ERO, D/5/Sb2/5 [29 May 1599]; D/ACA/35, fos 87, 92–93v; Kalu, 'Jacobean Church', 45, 73.

⁷³ Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 301; TNA, STAC 8/207/21.

⁷⁴ While there is little doubt that many officials were subjected to a great deal of verbal abuse and intimidation in administering what were widely referred to as the 'bawdy courts', recent studies have suggested that the church courts were also popular among many contemporaries, offering a cheap, quick, and efficient alternative to the secular courts for a variety of offences; see especially the pioneering study of M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage, 1570–1640* (Cambridge, 1987).

Rickling, whom he accused of using witchcraft to 'waste and consume' him. Elizabeth was acquitted but Tuer died shortly afterwards of his afflictions.⁷⁵

While the religious conservatism of these clerics is to some extent inferred from their work as prominent court officials, there can be little doubt about the sympathies of William Lambert, the vicar of Hornchurch, who was responsible for the imprisonment of one Upney of Dagenham for witchcraft in 1589.⁷⁶ Lambert's failings in the eyes of the many puritan critics among his congregation were laid bare in a series of depositions before the church courts where his opponents had been cited for not attending their own parish church. In the year in which Lambert was busy prosecuting witches, John Pickman explained that the reason he did not go to services at Hornchurch was because 'the word of God is not truly preached [there] by Mr Lambert [who] preached unsound doctrine, viz. . . . that Christ's apostles were drunk, and suchlike false doctrine'. Others, such as Thomas Lathom, preferred to attend sermons at Romford, for 'the word of God is truly preached there'. When asked in 1591 if he would rethink and attend services in his home parish in future, he replied that he would not until it was supplied with a better preacher 'for that Mr Lambert doth not edify his conscience in his preaching'. Ultimately, the 'better sort' in the parish took matters into their own hands and persuaded the patrons of the living, New College, Oxford, to allow them to nominate future ministers in return for a financial contribution to the cost of the living.⁷⁷ Thereafter, the parish became a haven of puritanism. It did not, however, see an end to witchcraft. In 1617, Susan Barker of neighbouring Upminster, which like Hornchurch was dominated by puritan lay activists, was accused of using witchcraft to murder two Hornchurch

⁷⁵ Cockburn (ed.), *Essex Indictments James I*, 247. Tuer's brother Abdias, vicar of Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, 1609–26, and, like John, a surrogate in the church courts, gave evidence at the trial of Parnsbye. He is also mentioned in John Tuer's will of 1621 as his executor, while another surrogate, Edmund Tillingham, acted as witness to the will (which must have presumably been made while Tuer was sick of his last illness). Interestingly, Tuer Wade, referred to as John Tuer's godson, was later a witness in a witchcraft trial at Henham in Essex in 1650: LMA, MF X019/014, fo. 91r; ERO, Q/Sba 2/74. It should be stressed, however, that church court officials were just as likely to use their authority to protect those accused of witchcraft. In 1589, John Frith, rector of Hawkwell and surrogate to the archdeacon of Essex, supplied Joan Hinckson of Rochford with a testimonial certifying to her blamelessness and virtue: Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 282.

⁷⁶ ERO, D/AEA/14, fo. 86. This may refer to Joan Upney, who was tried at the assizes in 1589, or it may refer to one of her daughters whom she alluded to in her confession. Details of Joan's trial can be found in Anon., *The Apprehension and Confession of Three Notorious Witches* (London, 1589), A4v-Br. For a modern edition of this rare tract, see Gibson (ed.), *Early Modern Witches*, 129–37 [confession of Joan Upney on 134].

⁷⁷ ERO, D/AEA/14, fo. 127v; D/AEA/15, fo. 129v. The religious conflict engendered by Lambert at Hornchurch and subsequent developments there are discussed more fully in M. K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed: The Manor and Liberty of Havering, 1500–1620* (Cambridge, 2002), 181–3. Further evidence that religious differences and fear of witchcraft were inextricably entwined in the neighbourhood of Hornchurch are suggested by the case of Joan Barker of nearby Romford who was charged with espousing 'false doctrine' and witchcraft in 1583. Her husband Richard, who was also accused of peddling false doctrine, claimed that Christ's godhead was inferior to that of his father, suggesting the infiltration of early anti-trinitarian ideas into this part of Essex: ERO, D/AEA/12, fos 14r-v.

men in an action that may have been inspired by the godly zeal of those who lived in the latter parish.⁷⁸

One final case study from Essex may be cited to illustrate a number of the patterns and themes highlighted above. The port borough of Maldon in the east of the county is well known to historians of religion in late Tudor England as the home parish of the celebrated puritan divine George Gifford (c.1548–1600). Gifford, of course, is also a widely cited figure in the history of English witchcraft, as in 1579 and 1587 he authored two important works on the subject that have been widely cited since as the product of a temperate, moderate, and broadly sceptical frame of mind.⁷⁹ Prior to Gifford's appointment there as minister in 1582, the town of Maldon was widely depicted by him and his supporters as a place where the godly were marginalized by 'a multitude of papists, heretics, and other enemies of God and her Royal Majesty'. According to Gifford himself, writing in the year of his coming to the town, it was one of the 'desolate places . . . where it appeareth by the abundance of iniquity, that of long time Satan hath had his throne'. Within a matter of a few years Gifford, with the help of an active puritan majority in the borough's government, had successfully implemented a wide-ranging campaign of moral reform, creating in the process a godly commonwealth that mirrored those other 'cities upon a hill' that were springing up elsewhere in England at this time.⁸⁰ At Maldon, however, there is no suggestion that this process of moral regeneration and godly evangelism was accompanied by heightened fear of witches and calls for their eradication. During the course of the 1580s, there were no witch trials in the town, despite the fact that there was much activity in neighbouring villages. Moreover, when accusations were made in the following decade against a local woman, Margaret Wiseman, all the evidence suggests that this case was instigated not by the ruling group in the town, which was firmly supportive of Gifford, but rather by a small clique within the corporation that was decidedly opposed to the godly reform programme initiated by the town's

⁷⁸ Cockburn (ed.), *Essex Indictments James I*, 171. Intimations of puritan involvement in the prosecution of Barker are suggested by the fact that one of the witnesses, Catherine Coppin, was refused churching in 1607 because she did not wear a veil. She apparently walked out of church, observing that she had appeared 'as an honest woman in her usual apparel': ERO, D/AEA/24, fo. 184. For puritan misgivings about traditional churching practices, see D. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), 212–29. For the militant lay activism of the leading parishioners of Upminster, see Kalu, 'Jacobean Church', 164–5.

⁷⁹ Gifford's reputation as an enlightened thinker with regard to witchcraft is most lauded in the work of Alan Macfarlane, who has described his approach to the subject as 'one of the most humane and rational attacks on current beliefs about the evil power of witches'. He has even gone so far as to suggest that Gifford's was a mind 'trying to rise above the limitations and assumptions of his time' and one whose work 'entitles [him] to the position of one of the great minor writers in English history': A. Macfarlane, 'A Tudor Anthropologist: George Gifford's *Discourse and Dialogue*', in S. Anglo (ed.), *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft* (London, 1977), 140–55 [quotes at 145].

⁸⁰ Peel (ed.), *Seconde Parte of a Register*, ii, 187–8; G. Gifford, *A Dialogue Between a Papist and a Protestant* (London, 1582), A3r. For Gifford's transformation of Maldon into a miniature commonwealth reformed along godly lines, see especially W. J. Petchey, 'The Borough of Maldon, Essex, 1500–1688: A Study in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Urban History', PhD thesis (Leicester, 1972), 223–6 and *passim*.

puritan elite.⁸¹ Wiseman was first accused in the court of the archdeacon of Colchester in the spring of 1591, and again a year later, this time under the jurisdiction of the archdeacon of Essex. On the latter occasion, she was exonerated on the compurgation of six Maldon inhabitants, three of whom were known supporters and friends of Gifford. Equally, none of those who witnessed against her are known to have possessed any connection with Gifford and his supporters.⁸² At the same time, Wiseman's enemies sought to have her tried in the secular courts and presented her for witchcraft at the regular sessions of the borough at Maldon. In all probability, the case against Wiseman was an unfortunate by-product of corporate infighting and was promoted by Gifford's opponents in order to embarrass the godly faction in the town. In 1591, in the same year that Wiseman was first presented for witchcraft in the church courts, Edmund Hunt, one of the leading supporters of the dissident group in Maldon, had been prosecuted at the borough quarter sessions for using magic to search for lost treasure at nearby Beeleigh Abbey.⁸³ Hunt, who was a haberdasher or hatter by trade, also served as an apparitor in the archdeaconry of Essex, and in this capacity answered to the leader of the anti-puritan faction, Robert Palmer (d.1600), who, in addition to possessing the living of All Saints, acted as the archdeacon's Official in and around Maldon as well as serving as chaplain to the rigid anti-puritan bishop of London, John Aylmer (1521–1594). In all likelihood, the prosecution of Margaret Wiseman at Maldon in 1592 was an act of retaliation on the part of Hunt and the Palmer faction, Hunt abusing his power as a minor church court official to attack a vulnerable woman with links to the puritan clique that dominated the government of the town. As a member of that alienated minority who bitterly resented the fact that under Gifford's guidance the town had become 'an over-policed and over-punished community' in which traditional forms of social conviviality had been replaced by the new puritanical 'culture of discipline', Hunt, himself a victim of the puritan aversion to magic, was thus able to strike a blow in the simmering conflict between the rival groups.⁸⁴

The evidence from Essex suggests that accusations and prosecutions for witchcraft were never solely determined by specific religious or ideological allegiances. It does, however, underscore the point that witch-hunting was more likely to arise in

⁸¹ For the prosecutions against Wiseman in the church and borough courts in 1591–92, see Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 284, 291, 297; Macfarlane, 'A Tudor Anthropologist', 144.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 154n, citing Petchey.

⁸³ ERO, D/B 3/1/8, fos 23, 23v, 87v. Beeleigh Abbey was the home of the Franck family, who supported the godly faction and the endeavours of Gifford in reforming the town.

⁸⁴ Palmer, who was instituted to the cure of All Saints, Maldon, in 1587 following Gifford's brief suspension, served as Official to the archdeacon of Essex from 1591–93. By 1594, his activities in the town had so incensed the supporters of Gifford (who now held the post of town lecturer) that they forced Palmer's convention before the Court of High Commission. For these and related events, see especially J. Anglin, 'The Court of the Archdeacon of Essex, 1571–1609: An Institutional and Social Study', PhD thesis (Los Angeles, 1965), 40; Petchey, 'Borough of Maldon', 222–58. Hunt's standing as a supporter of Palmer against the precisians and Gifford and his devotion to custom and tradition is attested by his comment in 1594 that 'the chere of the town was lost' following the corporation's decision to ban a troop of actors: ERO, D/B 3/1/8, fo. 137r.

communities where religious conflict was endemic and permeated communal relations. While there is still a great deal of work to be done investigating the local origins of witch trials in other parts of England at this time, the evidence from other counties and regions would appear to bear out this general observation. In a number of parishes in Elizabethan Surrey, for example, puritan attempts to evangelize communities coincided with witch trials. Thus the trial of Elizabeth Robinson of Wandsworth for witchcraft at the Lent assizes in 1572 occurred at the same time as the radical puritan minister of the parish, John Edwin (d.1585), was facing prosecution in the same court for a variety of offences relating to his unwillingness to subscribe to the Book of Common Prayer.⁸⁵ Moreover, evidence from the neighbouring parish of Battersea in the late 1580s and early 1590s illustrates the extent to which ideological disputes between religious factions might become enmeshed in accusations and counter-accusations of witchcraft. The focus of parochial conflict here was the puritan vicar Owen Ridley, who, like Edwin before him, was prosecuted at the assizes for his outspoken opposition to various ceremonies prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer, including the use of the cross in baptism and Anglican directives regarding fasting.⁸⁶ Shortly after this trial, Ridley's supporters in the village petitioned Lord Burghley in an attempt to exonerate him from the charge of his enemies that he had consorted with witches and had attempted to procure the death of a man by witchcraft. These were serious charges. Ridley's supporters were convinced that some within the parish were seeking 'to deprive him of his life', though reference to a second petition, addressed by the opposing faction to Dr Swale, commissioner for causes ecclesiastical, suggests that their chief aim was to secure Ridley's deprivation. In defending their minister, the pro-Ridley faction affirmed that he was a zealous and 'painefull' preacher, who 'wee take rather to hate wytches, then to seeke after them; for he hath spoken often very bitterly against them out of the Bible'.⁸⁷ It is difficult to avoid the conclusion here

⁸⁵ J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records. Surrey Indictments Elizabeth I* (London, 1980), 98, 101, 112. One of the cases against Edwin was removed to the Court of Queen's Bench. The prosecution of Edwin for nonconformity in 1571–72 may have some relation to the fact that the parish of Wandsworth at this time was in all probability the site of the first experiment within early puritan circles to establish a Presbyterian form of discipline within the Church of England: see Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 138–9.

⁸⁶ Ridley was indicted for speaking scandalous words rather than the practice of nonconformity, the detailed wording of the surviving indictments providing a vivid image of the nature of his preaching at Battersea in the heightened atmosphere preceding the Spanish invasion in 1588. In typical puritan fashion he compared various aspects of the Anglican liturgy to the 'superstitions and divellyshe ceremonies used by the papists in the Celebracon of their sacrament': Cockburn (ed.), *Surrey Indictments Elizabeth I*, 324–5.

⁸⁷ Details of the two petitions (now, seemingly, no longer extant) are contained in an account made available to the London historian Daniel Lysons in the late eighteenth century, and published in his *The Environs of London*, 4 vols (London, 1792–96), i, 36–8. Unfortunately, Lysons did not provide any details of the forty-three parishioners who signed the anti-Ridley petition, and only alluded by name to Cooke and a fellow puritan minister, Robert Claye, as among the fourteen who wrote to Lord Burghley. For Cooke, who may have been a client of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, see *ODNB*, sub Cooke, Robert. Claye has not been positively identified, but he may have been the Robert Clay who was ordained by Grindal as bishop of London in 1561, and subsequently served as rector of St Mary Bothaw, London (1567–74) and prebend of Ipthorne in the diocese of Chichester (1571–74).

that Ridley's preaching against witches had badly backfired, and though he, with the support of powerful figures such as Robert Cooke (d.1593), Clarenceaux King of Arms, managed to avoid further prosecution and retain his living, his co-accused, a woman called Mary Strangwitche, was not so fortunate.⁸⁸

For Ridley, the attempt to convert his parishioners to godly ways through invoking the threat of witchcraft led, as Scot and others feared it would, to communal division and discord rather than a new-found sense of Protestant unity and social cohesion. His puritan colleagues elsewhere in the country, however, would appear to have had more success when they were able to combine forces, often with the collusion of the ecclesiastical authorities and prominent lay figures, in order to promote evangelical preaching and moral reform through the agency of well-publicized cases of witchcraft and diabolical possession. Too frequently, cases of the latter in particular have been dismissed as little more than strategic manoeuvres in a wider propaganda campaign aimed at undermining the Anglican hierarchy. Careful study of a number of these cases, however, suggests that for participants and onlookers alike, they functioned on a variety of levels and were never construed merely as 'propaganda', a term that seriously undermines the extent to which contemporaries perceived these events as a genuine opportunity to converse with that arch-enemy of mankind, Satan, and, in the process, to learn more about the nature of sin and how best to combat its spread in a reformed society. In such instances, as Stuart Clark has commented, the body of the demoniac thus came to represent 'some sort of polity for which two mighty potentates contended'.⁸⁹ Such encounters also provided a rare opportunity for learned churchmen to contend with the Devil on his own terms, the various disputants often resorting to Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, as well as citing classical authors, in sparring with those demons who had taken possession of weak and vulnerable youths. While it would be wrong to dismiss entirely the suggestion that such showpiece occasions afforded an opportunity for godly ministers to engage with popular culture,⁹⁰ and make converts in the process, it is important to note that they

⁸⁸ Proceedings against the unfortunately named Margaret Strangwitche were initiated at the Kingston Quarter Sessions in October 1591, i.e. shortly after the various petitions alluded to above (and internally dated to about 1590). It would be tempting to speculate that her victims, the Richardson family, were members of the anti-Ridley faction, but no surviving evidence has yet been found to support this conjecture: Cockburn (ed.), *Surrey Indictments Elizabeth I*, 379. This case may have previously escaped the attention of witchcraft historians as it was not included in Ewen's detailed calendar of witchcraft prosecutions on the home circuit between 1559 and 1736.

⁸⁹ Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 579.

⁹⁰ Darren Oldridge has recently argued that the puritans were not averse to co-opting aspects of popular culture, in this case popular attitudes towards a physical and omnipresent Devil, in order to promote their programme of religious reform. In the process, he likens the puritans' willingness to reconcile learned and popular models of the Devil, with their equally accommodating approach to such diverse topics as bell-ringing, charivaris and the utility of sensational publications such as the murder pamphlet: D. Oldridge, 'Protestant Conceptions of the Devil in Early Stuart England', *History*, 85 (2000), 232–46. A similar process of accommodation has been detected at work in the Scottish Reformation: see M. Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven, CT and London, 2002). Oldridge's view that English puritans characteristically emphasized the spiritual nature of the Devil has recently been reiterated in the work of Nathan Johnstone, who has extended this observation to English Protestantism in general: D. Oldridge, *The Devil in Early Modern England* (Stroud, 2000); N. Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2006).

were also of interest to a broad cross-section of clerical and lay opinion in Protestant England that welcomed any opportunity to discover more about their own body politic through an interrogation of its inverted mirror image in the shape of the demoniac.

This is evident in a number of cases of bewitchment and dispossession, some better known and explored than others, dating from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Often these proved surprisingly uncontroversial, despite the attempt by some writers and critics to appropriate them for obvious polemical gain. Many went unreported at the time, as in the case of the Nottingham boy, John Fox, who, some time around 1612, was successfully exorcized by the puritan minister Richard Rothwell (d.1627).⁹¹ Likewise the case of the Northwich boy, Thomas Harrison, whose protracted possession and subsequent exorcism took place round the turn of the century, and went largely unremarked.⁹² One of the more noteworthy aspects of this case lay in the fact that it would appear to have succeeded in gaining the approval of a wide cross-section of religious opinion in Cheshire, including the approbation of the moderate bishop of Chester, Richard Vaughan (c.1553–1607), who, following an interview with Harrison, granted a licence authorizing certain nominated preachers, all well-known puritans, to conduct a service of fasting and prayer over the boy.⁹³ Vaughan's role in this affair could not have been more dissimilar to that of Bancroft in London, where, at roughly the same time, a major stand-off was taking place between the puritan supporters of the bewitched maid, Mary Glover, and the forces of the bishop, led by Bancroft's chaplain Samuel Harsnet, who desperately sought the acquittal of a local woman, Elizabeth Jackson, suspected of bewitchment.⁹⁴ But unlike Bancroft, Vaughan was notably moderate in his dealings with the puritan wing of the Anglican Church. As bishop of Chester (1587–1604), he had colluded with puritans in his diocese and desisted from prosecuting them, preferring instead to focus attention on what he considered a far more urgent problem, namely recusancy.⁹⁵ And like many of his

⁹¹ S. Clarke, *A Generall Martyrologie . . . Whereunto is Added, the Lives of Sundry Modern Divines* (London, 1651), 458–61. Rothwell's dialogue with the Devil was conducted, through the possessed boy, in Greek and Hebrew, while the latter was not averse to citing classical poets. Also present on this occasion was the young puritan minister Richard Bernard, who later wrote on the subject of witchcraft (below, 63–4).

⁹² Like the Nottingham case, our knowledge of the Northwich exorcism derives from a posthumous, hagiographic account, in this case that of the godly Cheshire gentleman John Bruen, published in 1641: see W. Hinde, *A Faithfull Remonstrance of the Holy Life and Happy Death of John Bruen of Bruen-Stapleford, in the County of Chester* (London, 1641), 148–54. Not surprisingly, both sides in the Darrell affair took a keen interest in the alleged possession of Thomas Harrison and briefly alluded to it in their respective publications: see J. Darrell, *A Survey of Certain Dialogical Discourses: Written by John Deacon and John Walker* (1602), 54; Anon., *A Summarie Answer to Al the Material Points in Any of Master Darel His Bookes* (London, 1602), 70–9.

⁹³ The case is briefly discussed in J. Eales, 'Thomas Pierson and the Transmission of the Moderate Puritan Tradition', *Midland History*, 20 (1995), 81–2. Pierson (c.1573–1633) was one of a number of local puritan preachers who actively sought to reclaim the boy from the clutches of the Devil.

⁹⁴ For the Mary Glover case, see especially MacDonald (ed.), *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London*.

⁹⁵ For Vaughan's 'moderation' and fierce anti-Catholicism, see *ODNB*, sub Vaughan, Richard; K. Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor: The Episcopate of James I* (Oxford, 1990), 272.

moderate, non-puritan colleagues he may well have found little to fear from a series of public fasts designed to exorcize a child, whose conversation revealed a preoccupation with sin, Catholicism, and the Devil and who repeatedly inveighed against drunkards, whores, and common swearers.

THE POLITICS OF WITCH-HUNTING IN EARLY JACOBAN ENGLAND: THE CASE OF ANNE GUNTER

Local circumstances, as always in cases of witchcraft and possession, were vital in shaping the response of the authorities to such events. These never functioned in isolation, however, from broader developments within the body politic, the two often fusing to create a unique set of circumstances that might inform reaction to any given instance of diabolism. This was noticeably the case in the early years of the seventeenth century, when growing speculation surrounding the succession gave way to a realization that the next monarch would be a king with a proven track record as an expert in the field of demonology. The uncertainty surrounding the role that James I, as King of England, might play in the increasingly polarized debate about the reality of witchcraft and possession was clearly an important factor in the minds of many educated laymen and senior clerics in the early years of the new reign. For the aged archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift and his ally, Bancroft, these were anxious times. Not only was there general concern as to what direction the English Church might take under a Calvinist monarch such as James, but there was also, as their puritan opponents gleefully noted, the matter of the King's public stance on witchcraft to be negotiated. These were serious issues which no doubt account for the fact that the first sermon delivered at court following the death of Queen Elizabeth in March 1603 took as its text Luke 11:14 on the theme of diabolical possession. The preacher, John King (d.1621), speaking as the mouthpiece of Bancroft, wisely refrained from attacking the puritans, stressed the theme of Protestant unity (despite 'some division of late'), and focused his listeners' ire on the traditional enemy within, Roman Catholicism. He then went on to compare Christ's role as exorcizer of bodies to that of the Protestant Church in England, responsible for expelling the Devil from the country along with 'his legends . . . false miracles, exorcismes [and] superstitions'.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ J. Bruce (ed.), *Diary of John Manningham, of the Middle Temple, and of Bradbourne, Kent, Barrister-at-Law, 1602–1603* (London, Camden Soc., 99, 1868), 149–53. An indication, perhaps, of the weakness of the Bancroft–Harsnet stance on witchcraft is suggested by another reference in Manningham's diary to a sermon preached on this subject by Henoeh Clapham in February 1603. Clapham was reported to have preached against 'essential possession', probably at the request of Bancroft, but if this was the case then it suggests that the bishop of London was finding it difficult to drum up allies in the campaign against puritan exorcists in the capital. Bancroft would appear to have detested Clapham, a notoriously fickle and unstable character, who had progressed from Presbyterianism to outright separatism before recanting and rejoining the Anglican fold some time around 1600. Thereafter, he was licensed to preach in and about London, and consistently used the pulpit to embarrass his ecclesiastical superiors and patrons by enunciating highly eccentric views on a range of subjects. His unreliability as an expert voice on the subject of possession is also suggested by

If Bancroft and his allies were anxious at the prospect of a witch-hunting king, it is probably fair to say that puritan critics of the Anglican establishment, as well as many others sympathetic to their general cause, were hopeful that James' arrival in England might herald a new chapter in the English Reformation. This was evidently the view of the puritan cleric John Swan, who used the occasion of the controversy surrounding the Mary Glover case to remind Bancroft and his supporters that their stance in this affair effectively subverted the new King's published views on the real threat posed by witches to the commonwealth. Interestingly, he went on to allude to a recent call by a prominent puritan academic, John Ireton (d.1606), for a public disputation in one of the English universities on the question of the reality of witchcraft and 'whether there be any possessions & dispossessions in these dayes'.⁹⁷ It would be a mistake, however, to infer from Swan's intervention that interest in such topics was limited to a small but militant group of puritans within the Anglican Church. The evidence from another contemporary case of alleged possession, that of Anne Gunter of North Moreton in Berkshire, suggests these were issues that continued to elicit widespread interest among the generality of English divines, particularly those of a Calvinist bent who were to grow increasingly fearful of the emergence of a powerful Arminian clique in the English Church.

On the surface, the case of Anne Gunter (1604–05) would appear to demonstrate no obvious link with similar, well-publicized cases from this period, particularly with respect to the apparent absence of any strong religious motive or partisan affiliations on the part of the main actors in this drama.⁹⁸ No puritan preachers were known to have taken part in the proceedings at North Moreton, and the girl's father and family possessed no transparent links to puritan networks in Berkshire.⁹⁹ The case did, however, attract the interest of a large number of Oxford theologians and students, some of whom prayed at the bedside of the girl and offered pastoral support to the beleaguered family while others later testified on behalf of the girl's father, who was prosecuted in the court of Star Chamber in 1606 for masterminding the alleged fraud. The key figure here was undoubtedly Thomas Holland (d.1612), who also happened to be the afflicted girl's brother-in-law. Holland,

the fact that his views on these and related issues were diametrically opposed to those of his patron, Sir Edmund Anderson (d.1605), who in 1602 ruled in favour of the London puritans in the case of the bewitchment of Mary Glover: *ibid.*, 128; *ODNB*, sub Clapham, Henoch.

⁹⁷ J. Swan, *A True and Breife Report, of Mary Glovers Vexation* (London?, 1603), 2–3. Ireton was a prebend of Lincoln College, Oxford, with a long track record of support for puritanical causes. In 1576 he called prophesyings 'the universities of the pore ministers', and was later a prominent spokesman for the puritan (and Presbyterian) cause in the east Midlands, where, as rector of Kegworth in Leicestershire, he emerged as a supporter of the exorcist John Darrell: P. Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559–1625* (Oxford, 1982), 130; Gibson, *Possession, Puritanism and Print*, 84, 133, 142.

⁹⁸ The local and national context of the case is dealt with fully in J. Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A Horrible and True Story of Football, Witchcraft, Murder, and the King of England* (London, 1999). The chief source for Sharpe's book is the voluminous depositions to be found in TNA, STAC 8/4/10.

⁹⁹ But note my speculative comment below, 84 and n, linking Anne Gunter's brother Harvey and kinsman Nicholas to various godly networks in Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

in fact, played little or no ostensible part in the proceedings relating to the trial of the witch suspected of causing the possession of Anne Gunter, nor in subsequent legal proceedings against his father-in-law. Behind the scenes, however, he was almost certainly responsible for orchestrating support for the bewitched girl. This becomes evident when one looks more deeply into the academic profiles and religious affiliations of those Oxford scholars and clerics, most members of Exeter College, who proffered support to the Gunter family throughout their ordeal. As rector of the College, Holland could easily have prevented those under his tutelage from opting to assist Anne Gunter. Instead, he chose to remain aloof while others of his acquaintance became actively involved in the affair, assisted no doubt by the fact that for a brief period in 1605 Anne Gunter was accommodated at the rector's lodgings in Exeter College. Among those Exeter men sympathetic to the Gunters' cause were Holland's future son-in-law John Whetcombe (d.1635), Edward Chetwin or Chetwynd (d.1639), William Helme (d.1639), William Harvey (d. 1666), and two future bishops, John Prideaux (1578–1650) and Thomas Winniffe (1576–1654). What possible motive might have attracted these men, and others such as the eminent scholars Thomas James (d.1629), first librarian of the Bodleian, and John Harding (c.1562–1610), Regius Professor of Hebrew, to North Moreton in 1604–05 to witness and attest to the demonically induced sufferings of the daughter of an obscure Berkshire gentleman?

The answer would appear to lie in the religious affiliations and sensibilities of this group as they evolved and coalesced in reaction to the broader ecclesiastical politics of the period. All were scholarly men, highly respected among their peers. But more importantly all shared a deep-seated commitment to a Calvinist Church of England, free of any lingering Catholic vestiges. None were puritans, but many were sympathetic to the plight of their more militant puritan colleagues in the Church. Above all, they shared the puritans' disdain for what they perceived as the insidious and growing influence of crypto-Catholicism in the Church under the guise of Arminianism, a state of affairs that was bound to provoke confrontation with figures such as Bancroft, Harsnet, and Neile who were responsible for orchestrating the proceedings against Brian Gunter in Star Chamber in 1606.¹⁰⁰ Typical in this respect was Thomas Holland, who, in addition to holding the Rectorship of Exeter College, held the post of Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford from 1589 until his death in 1612. In 1604, in the same year that Anne Gunter first experienced her strange fits, Holland witnessed at first hand the growing threat to Calvinist orthodoxy in religious and academic circles when he presided over the undergraduate exercises performed by a young William Laud. Alarmed at Laud's contention that the only true churches were those organized on episcopalian lines, Holland reproved the erring student and roundly berated him for spreading 'discord among brethren, and between the Church of

¹⁰⁰ All except one of the seven scholars named above gave evidence on behalf of Brian Gunter (Whetcombe, Prideaux, Helme, James, Harding, and Winniffe). For the role of Bancroft (now archbishop of Canterbury), Harsnet and the proto-Arminian dean of Westminster, Richard Neile (1562–1640), in these proceedings, see Sharpe, *Bewitching of Anne Gunter*, 183–98.

England and reformed Churches abroad'. Holland would later be among the first at Oxford to issue warning of the dangers posed by the spread of Arminianism, ably assisted in later years by his friend and successor at Exeter, and adversary of Archbishop Laud, John Prideaux.¹⁰¹ Under Holland's stewardship, Exeter College became renowned as a seminary for able, learned, and godly preachers.¹⁰² In 1624 Prideaux used the occasion of the dedication of the new college chapel as an opportunity to look back on his own days at the College and to praise the work of his predecessor, Holland, in establishing a 'knot of noted schollers', among whom he singled out for special mention many of those who had earlier championed the cause of Anne Gunter, including John Whetcombe, Edward Chetwyn, and William Helme.¹⁰³ There can be little doubt then that the coming together of this group of scholars in 1605–06 in support of the Gunters represented more than simply a coincidence.

In 1605 the future direction of the Anglican Church lay in the balance. The Hampton Court Conference of the previous year had given partial encouragement to the moderate puritan wing of the Church, including royal support for a new authorized and reformed version of the Bible,¹⁰⁴ but the death of Whitgift in February 1604 and the succession of Bancroft to the see of Canterbury now threatened to undermine these gains.¹⁰⁵ Amid growing fears over doctrinal issues, in particular the fate of predestinarian theology in a Church governed by men like Bancroft and Harsnet, it was perhaps natural that some of the country's leading

¹⁰¹ Holland, yet another protégé of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, was a staunch and consistent opponent of all things Catholic; one of the things that most disturbed him about Laud's BD thesis was its near total reliance upon the Roman Catholic controversialist, Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621): *ODNB*, sub Holland, Thomas; N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590–1640* (Oxford, 1987), 72. A number of nineteenth-century commentators referred to his puritanical antipathy to the 'popish' ceremonial innovations introduced by Bancroft. It was also claimed that at his death in 1612 he left a number of manuscript works intended for the press, 'but they fell into hands unfriendly to the Puritanism they contained [and] were never published': B. Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans*, 3 vols (London, 1813), ii, 213; A. McClure, *The Translators Revived: A Biographical Memoir of the Authors of the English Version of the Holy Bible* (New York, 1858), 137.

¹⁰² C. M. Dent, *Protestant Reformers in Elizabethan Oxford* (Oxford, 1983), 177–9.

¹⁰³ J. Prideaux, 'A Sermon Preached on the Fift of October 1624 at the Consecration of St. Iames Chappell in Exeter College', in *Certaine Sermons* (Oxford, 1637), T8v–V1r. Whetcombe may have shared his father-in-law's puritanical sympathies. Two of his sons were associates and business partners of the puritan patriarch of Dorchester, John White, and invested in the latter's American adventure: F. Rose-Troup, *John White, the Patriarch of Dorchester (Dorset) and the Founder of Massachusetts, 1575–1648* (New York, 1930), 108, 110, 111, 115, 154, 163, 456. Likewise, Chetwyn may have harboured puritan sympathies. He later established very close and enduring friendships with two puritan clerics, Samuel Croke and William Thomas: see *ODNB*, sub Chetwyn, Edward; Croke, Samuel; and Thomas, William. He was also an avowed predestinarian and author of *The Strait Gate and Narrow Way to Life* (1612), a defence of Calvinist orthodoxy dedicated to archbishop George Abbot. Prideaux described Helme in glowing terms as his 'faithfull and deserving Tutor, ever with thankfullnesse of me to be remembered': Prideaux, 'Sermon Preached', V1r. He also reserved for special mention the 'worthy physician', Dr Robert Vilvain (1576–1663), a medical student at Exeter at the time of the Gunter affair, who provided expert testimony as to the 'supernatural' origins of Anne Gunter's afflictions: TNA, STAC 8/4/10, m. 173. For a short account of his life, which fails to mention his involvement in the Gunter affair, see *ODNB*, sub Vilvain, Robert.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Holland was among those scholars chosen by the King to contribute to this work.

¹⁰⁵ Tyacke has also noted that it was at Hampton Court that a proto-Arminian group within the hierarchy of the Church first began to take shape: Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 28.

Calvinist scholars were tempted to appropriate a dispute over bewitchment as an opportune moment to persuade the King to remain loyal to the Calvinist traditions of the English Church. The King's presence at Oxford in August 1605 had in fact provided just such an opportunity for the likes of Holland and Winniffe, who both engaged in learned disputations staged for James' entertainment. They did not, however, succeed in convincing the King of the reality of Anne Gunter's afflictions. Examined by James on the first day of his royal visit, he soon became convinced she was counterfeiting and placed her in the care of his sceptical archbishop. As far as the King and his senior ecclesiastical advisers were concerned, the Gunter affair was probably just one more in a long line of politically suspect cases of alleged bewitchment that surfaced in the early years of the reign. In the same year as the Gunter trial, James had also become closely involved in a similar business at Cambridge, where a local minister with puritan tendencies was accused of various offences relating to witchcraft.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, he had personally intervened to uncover the fraudulent practices of the 'sleeping preacher' Richard Haydocke (d. c.1642), who was said to have preached sermons in his sleep against the Pope, the 1604 canons, and the use of the cross in baptism.¹⁰⁷ The King, moreover, would have been fully conversant with the Darrell affair, commenting sarcastically in 1604 on the potential virtues of tobacco smoke as a fumigant that might 'serve for a precious Relicke, both for the superstitious Priests, and the insolent Puritanes, to cast out devils withall'.¹⁰⁸ James, it is probably fair to conclude, was thus conditioned to respond sceptically to such high-profile and politically sensitive cases. Moreover, the advice of his newly enthroned archbishop would almost certainly have alerted him to the threat posed to the Church of England by popular puritan propagandists operating in the guise of exorcists. More problematic, though, was the response of those academics, theologians, and churchmen who represented the middle ground in the English Church—anti-Catholic and Calvinist divines such as Holland, Prideaux, and their Exeter College colleagues, who rallied to the cause of Brian Gunter in 1605–06. Here, it is worth pointing out that by far the most significant aspect of their response to this affair was their unwillingness to promote the 'exorcistic potential' of Anne Gunter's bewitchment, and to concentrate instead on the merit of seeking a legal solution to the young maid's distemper

¹⁰⁶ BL, Add. MS 6177, fos 199r-v, 403–5; CUL, MS Mm.I.40, 384–5; HMC, *Calendar of the Cecil Papers in Hatfield House*, vol. 17 (London, 1938), 19–20, 22, 31–3, 36.

¹⁰⁷ J. Stow, *The Survey of London* (London, 1633), 864; H. S. Scott (ed.), 'The Journal of Sir Roger Wilbraham, Solicitor-General in Ireland and Master of Requests... 1593–1616', in *The Camden Miscellany: Volume the Tenth* (London, Camden Soc., 4, 1902), 70; J. Nichols, *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities, of King James the First, His Royal Consort, Family, and Court*, 4 vols (London, 1828; reprinted New York, 1964), i, 508–10. By what is either a remarkable coincidence or a reason as yet unearthed, Anne Gunter, in the aftermath of the failed witchcraft trial at the Abingdon assizes in the spring of 1605, was placed in the custody of Henry Cotton, bishop of Salisbury. There, she was befriended by one Joan Greene, servant to the physician and 'sleeping preacher' Richard Haydocke, whose own fraudulent behaviour had recently been exposed by the King: Sharpe, *Bewitching of Anne Gunter*, 171–5. It is highly probable that Haydocke, who now sought to ingratiate himself with the King, was somehow instrumental in encouraging his servant to gain Anne Gunter's confidence and thus encourage her to confess to the fraud.

¹⁰⁸ King James I, *A Counter-blaste to Tobacco* (London, 1604), C3r.

through a prosecution of her tormentors under the new witchcraft statute. As Jim Sharpe has emphasized, the core aim of the Oxford scholars who flocked to the Gunters' cause was to confirm a diagnosis of witchcraft and promote the guilt of those suspected of bewitching Anne Gunter. Apart from one brief aside in the evidence of a local clergyman, there is scant evidence in the Gunter case of a concerted attempt by her clerical supporters to invoke the exorcistic procedures recently promoted by puritan critics of the Church. In seeking to steer a middle path between the excesses of puritanism and Catholicism, senior Calvinist theologians like Holland and Prideaux were content to argue that demons, through the actions of witches, might torment and possess the godly, but they were extremely reluctant to assent to ritual exorcism as a means of delivering victims from the clutches of the Devil. In 1602, at the height of the controversy surrounding the silencing of Darrell and the Mary Glover case, Thomas Holland himself had delivered a Paul's Cross sermon in which, it was reported, he denounced those who 'sought to show the truth of religion by casting out devils'. More than thirty years later, Prideaux echoed his predecessor as rector of Exeter College when before Charles I he argued that the 'age of miracles' was over and spoke disparagingly of the 'late practices of Father Edmonds [and] Darrell, with their complices, to iustify Popery, and Puritanisme, by the casting out of Devills'.¹⁰⁹ Unlike many puritans, Holland and Prideaux were convinced that the Anglican Church was a true Church, and as such, required no miraculous signs of divine approval. At the same time, they remained convinced of the Devil's continuing attempts to tempt and vex the godly by 'supernatural' means, including witchcraft, for which a variety of religious (faith and prayer) and legal (church and secular courts) solutions were available.¹¹⁰

In broad terms, a spectrum of views on the reality of witchcraft and possession, mirroring the range of Protestant belief, was taking shape in Jacobean England. At one extreme, puritan critics of the Church would appear to have readily endorsed not just the idea of witchcraft, but also its real presence in English social life, frequently promoting specific cases of possession and bewitchment and using these as a vehicle to critique aspects of what they perceived as an unreformed Church and state. At the other end of the spectrum lay a small but influential group of clerics, often supported by sceptical physicians such as Edward Jorden (1569–1632), who remained defiantly opposed to any attempt to appropriate belief in witchcraft for partisan religious ends. For this group, not only was the age of miracles ended, and dispossession accordingly unwarranted, but they also began to doubt the very existence of witchcraft itself as a genuine threat to humankind. Somewhere in

¹⁰⁹ MacDonald, *Witchcraft and Hysteria*, xxii; J. Prideaux, *Hezekiah's Sickness and Recovery. A Sermon Preached Before the Kings Majestie at Woodstocke* (Oxford, 1636), 21. In the latter, Prideaux alluded to recent cases of exorcism in France.

¹¹⁰ 'Moderates' like Prideaux and his colleagues at Exeter College may have favoured the witch trial over public acts of dispossession in cases such as this because they preferred to see such acts of diabolism subjected to the authority of the godly state. The alternative, which saw competing divines utilizing the act of exorcism for partisan ends, was difficult to police as it took place, unregulated, outside the jurisdiction of the confessional state.

between lay a contested middle ground, occupied primarily by devoted Calvinists committed to the idea of the Anglican Church as a true Church, who would appear to have dismissed the usefulness of exorcism but retained belief in the propensity of the Devil to inflict harm on men and women, either directly or through the assistance of witches.

This is of course an overly simplistic schema that hides a more complex picture on the ground. Individuals frequently moved through a bewildering variety of religious positions and beliefs, often recanting former errors and declaring new truths. At the same time, the ties of friendship and familial bonds often undermined rigid religious divisions and fostered cooperation across unstable religious boundaries. Moreover, local conditions and circumstances were often vital in shaping the reactions of individuals and larger groups to specific accusations of witchcraft. In such cases, national issues often intersected with local concerns in a multitude of ways, while the influence of powerful local figures in Church and state often meant that patterns of witch-hunting, like patterns of religious persecution, were frequently shaped by the voices of individual churchmen or grandees. While there is not space here to discuss in detail all aspects of this complex picture, one conclusion seems inescapable: namely, that by the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth century, witch-hunting in England was on the wane. In the final section of this chapter, I seek to show how this decline was in fact related to the wider religious debates of the late Elizabethan and Jacobean period and to suggest that doubts surrounding the discovery and prosecution of witches in this period were increasingly evident across the religious spectrum, among puritans as well as their religious opponents.

THE MYTH OF THE WITCH-HUNTING PURITAN

The image of the puritan as obsessed with witchcraft is in many ways a distorted and one-dimensional image. Witch-hunting in the period before the civil war was not monopolized by men of a puritan stamp. Nor were puritan intellectuals alone responsible for elaborating the demonological beliefs that underpinned the detection and prosecution of witches. Moreover, as we have already seen, leading figures within puritan circles often articulated a range of views on the subject that reflected wider concerns in English society as to the nature of witchcraft and how best to respond to the threat posed by those identified as witches. Consequently, while puritan writers may have dominated the public debate on witchcraft, it is important to acknowledge that there were differences of opinion on this subject among puritans, especially after 1604, when the introduction of a new witchcraft statute raised concerns about the appropriate methods to be used in establishing the guilt of witches, as well as resurrecting pre-existing concerns as to the proper response of the godly to the assaults of the Devil and his human accomplices. The net effect of these developments was to initiate a debate within puritan circles with regard to witchcraft that mirrored the wider debate in England on this issue and further eroded support for witch-hunting in the period immediately before the civil war.

The unsettling effect of the new legislation is well captured by the comment of the puritan demonologist and witch hunter Thomas Cooper in 1619, when in a sermon preached at Oundle in Northamptonshire he alluded to the pernicious influence of the 'worldly wise' who condemn 'the whol doctrine and practize of Witchcraft, which is by compact with Satan, *because they would be sure of their covenants with him*'.¹¹¹ Earlier, in 1617, Cooper had written extensively on the theme of witchcraft, stressing its utility as a vehicle for Protestant evangelization. This work is frequently cited by historians of English witchcraft as a typical manifestation of the puritan obsession with the demonic—detailed, scholarly, and uncompromising in urging the authorities to wage war on that enemy within, the witch. Internal evidence suggests, however, that it may have been prompted in the main not by the reluctance of the religiously lukewarm authorities to act against witches, but by doubts emanating from within the ranks of Cooper's own puritan colleagues. In particular, I suggest here that Cooper's principal target was the puritan physician John Cotta (1575?–1627/8), whose own work on witchcraft first appeared in 1616 (a year before that of Cooper), and was republished, in expanded form, in 1624.¹¹²

Cotta was a native of Coventry who, following the receipt of his Cambridge MD in 1604, settled at Northampton, where he practised for almost twenty years before retiring to the town of his birth some time in the 1620s.¹¹³ Well connected to a number of leading puritan families (his mother was a Winthrop),¹¹⁴ he was able to utilize these connections in order to establish a flourishing medical practice in the Midlands that included some of the most prominent godly families in the area, including the Hales and the Tates.¹¹⁵ He was also active in godly circles in his

¹¹¹ T. Cooper, *The Worlclings Adventure. Discovering the Fearefull Estate of all Earthwormes, and Men of the World... Delivered in Two Sermons... at the Visitation of [the] Free Grammar Schoole at Oundell in North-Hamptonshire* (London, 1619), 27 (my emphasis). The 1604 statute had made it a capital offence to 'consult, covenant with, employ, feed or reward any evil and wicked spirit', and accordingly shifted the burden of proof on to the prosecutors to establish the existence of a contract between the witch and her master, the Devil. For a recent attempt to reappraise the meaning and significance of the 1604 Witchcraft Act, see the various essays in J. Newton and J. Bath (eds), *Witchcraft and the Act of 1604* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2008).

¹¹² J. Cotta, *The Triall of Witch-craft shewing the True and Right Methode of the Discovery: With a Confutation of Erroneous Wayes* (London, 1616); J. Cotta, *The Infallible True and Assured Witch: or, The Second Edition, of the Tryall of Witch-craft* (London, 1624). The title of Cooper's rebuttal would appear to deliberately echo both the focus and title of Cotta's own work on the subject: *The Mystery of Witch-craft. Discovering, the Truth, Nature, Occasions, Growth and Power Thereof: Together with the Detection of the Same* (London, 1617); reprinted with a new dedication as *Sathan Transformed into an Angel of Light* (London, 1622). If I am right in seeing these works as part of a protracted dispute between Cooper and Cotta, then it is probable that the publication of Cotta's second edition was intended as a riposte to Cooper's reissue of 1622.

¹¹³ For a brief survey of Cotta's life, career, and publications, see my entry in the *ODNB*.

¹¹⁴ Cotta's uncle, Adam Winthrop (1548–1623), the father of the future first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, referred to the Cottas of Coventry in his Latin pedigree and diary. He also owned a heavily annotated copy of Cotta's *The Triall of Witch-craft* (1616), which survives today in the New York Society Library.

¹¹⁵ Details of Cotta's extensive clientele among the gentry and aristocracy of the south Midlands can be gleaned from his various publications where he frequently discusses his treatment of their physical complaints and afflictions. Cotta's relationship with the Hales of Coventry is discussed more fully below. The puritan physician probably owed his greatest debt, however, to Sir William Tate (1559–1617), whose friendship and support was acknowledged in the dedication to Cotta's first

adopted town. As a resident of the parish of All Saints, Northampton, a hotbed of Jacobean puritanism, he fully supported the ministry of its beleaguered puritan pastor, Robert Catelin (d. 1614), as well as subscribing to the regime of moral reformation initiated by the godly oligarchy who dominated the government of the town throughout this period.¹¹⁶ Cotta's commitment to godly order found expression in his first book, written in 1612, where he defended the merits of a divinely ordained medical hierarchy in which there was no place for quacks and other unskilled and unlearned practitioners. In the same work, he frequently alluded to the sinister activities of white witches as well as citing recent incidents of witchcraft in Northamptonshire, themes which he subsequently expanded upon in *The Triall of Witch-craft* in 1616.¹¹⁷

Cotta's work on witchcraft served two main functions. First and foremost, it represented an attempt by a highly qualified medical expert to place demonological speculation on firmer foundations, and to purge existing practice, particularly in relation to the discovery of witches, of what he saw as its continuing 'superstitious' appendages. And second, it provided Cotta with an opportunity to subtly admonish and educate fellow puritans, particularly local magistrates, some of whom would appear to have acceded to 'superstition' in those methods that they adopted in examining suspected witches. Cotta, it should be emphasized, was not dismissive of witchcraft per se (though he was clearly familiar with the work of Reginald Scot, whom he cited elsewhere).¹¹⁸ He was, however, determined to

published work on empirics. Like Sir John Hales and Cotta himself, Tate was a native of Coventry. A leading figure among the puritan gentry of Northamptonshire, he supported the various initiatives to promote the puritan cause in the county spearheaded by Sir Richard Knightley. He also possessed influential connections with the borough of Northampton and was a major patron of puritan clergy in the town and neighbouring villages: J. Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts: the Diocese of Peterborough, 1603–1642', PhD thesis (Birmingham, 1989), 21. For a recent attempt to analyse Cotta's clientele, see T. H. J. Pettigrew, "Profitable unto the Vulgar": The Case and Cases of John Cotta's *Short Discoverie*', in E. L. Furdell (ed.), *Textual Healing: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Medicine* (Leiden, 2005), 119–38.

¹¹⁶ Cotta's activism on behalf of the puritan cause is evident in the role which he played in dispersing malicious libels in the town and county in 1607 (among those he named as intended recipients was Lady Coke of Hartwell Park, whom he cured in 1604). These were aimed at the ecclesiastical authorities who were then busy attempting to suppress nonconformist activity in the borough: TNA, STAC 8/205/20; J. Cotta, *Cotta Contra Antonium* (Oxford, 1623), 85; A. Cambers, 'Reading Libels in Early Seventeenth-Century Northamptonshire', in N. Lewycky and A. Morton (eds), *Getting Along? Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England: Essays in Honour of Professor W. J. Sheils* (Aldershot, 2012), 115–31. Further evidence of Cotta's established position within godly circles in Northampton is suggested by the fact that he was named as a beneficiary, along with the deprived minister Robert Catelin, in the will of the former puritan mayor, George Coldwell, in 1612: NRO, archdeaconry of Northampton wills, Book Z, 194 [dated 13 April 1612; proved 7 July 1612].

¹¹⁷ J. Cotta, *A Short Discoverie of the Unobserved Dangers of Severall Sorts of Ignorant and Unconsiderate Practisers of Physicke in England* (London, 1612). Cotta's medical conservatism, both in theory and practice, formed an integral element of a wider puritanical commitment to a divinely ordained and hierarchical social order built on Calvinist lines: see P. Elmer, 'Medicine, Religion and the Puritan Revolution', in R. French and A. Wear (eds), *The Medical Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1989), 14–15 and, more recently, R. Dandridge, 'Anti-Quack Literature in Early Stuart England', PhD thesis (London, 2012).

¹¹⁸ See, for example, Cotta, *Cotta Contra Antonium*, 39.

ensure that the methods used by magistrates and others to determine the guilt of witches were based on reason and experience and accorded fully with his conception of God as 'the God of order, and not of confusion'. At the current time, he stressed, witchcraft was a subject enshrouded in 'many doubts and ambiguities' and beset by 'obscuritie, difficultie, difference, contrarietie and contradiction'.¹¹⁹ This was particularly the case in relation to the detection of witches. Prosecutors were too ready, in Cotta's eyes, to prefer the miraculous over the natural in seeking to root out witches, a principle which he believed, on the basis of his own experience and Calvinist reasoning, gave rise to a series of groundless and 'superstitious' practices. Chief among these was the swimming test or water ordeal, a practice that Cotta characterized as 'rusticall, barbarous and rude' and which he rejected on theological grounds. And he was equally dismissive of other common practices such as scratching, beating, pinching, or otherwise drawing blood from suspected witches, as well as the idea that witches carried marks on their bodies as a sign of the diabolical compact. If such evidence was to be admitted in a court of law, Cotta argued, it would not only derogate from the omnipotence of God but at the same time raise the power of the Devil beyond its natural limits: 'God forbid, that the Divels signes and wonders, nay his truths should become any legal allegations or evidences in lawe.'¹²⁰

In practice, these reservations would appear to have made Cotta suspicious of most cases of witchcraft that he encountered in his daily vocation as a physician. In his first work of 1612, he refers to a number of cases of suspected witchcraft in Northamptonshire in which he adopted a sceptical approach.¹²¹ In all probability, he was also responsible for dissuading one of his most important patients, Sir John Hales (d. 1608) of Coventry, from publicly endorsing the claims of others, including the puritan preacher Thomas Cooper, that his wife had died as a result of witchcraft. Cooper was an indefatigable opponent of witches. In his first post as vicar of Great Budworth in Cheshire, he had witnessed at first hand the puritan-

¹¹⁹ Cotta, *Triall of Witch-craft*, A2v–A3r, A4r. These observations were addressed to Sir Edward Coke, Lord Chief Justice of King's Bench and one of the most senior of James' judges. Coke was widely perceived by the godly as a friend to the puritans' cause. It was probably no coincidence, therefore, that in the same year that Cotta dedicated his work on witchcraft to Coke, the corporation of Northampton, recently harassed by their arch-enemy, Sir John Lambe, chancellor of the diocese of Peterborough, over a variety of offences in relation to nonconformity and sabbath observance, forwarded a list of complaints to Coke in his capacity as a visiting circuit judge: J. Fielding, 'Arminianism in the Localities: Peterborough Diocese, 1603–1642', in K. Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–1642* (London, 1993), 99–100, 102.

¹²⁰ Cotta, *Triall of Witch-craft*, 104–23 [quote at 122]. I am indebted to Pierre Kapitanik for his critical observation, based on close reading of Cotta's sources and reading, that in composing *The Triall of Witch-craft* Cotta was writing more as a theologian than as a physician, and thus engaging with critics like Cooper on their own ground: see especially P. Kapitanik, 'From *The Discovery* to *The Trial of Witchcraft*: Doctor Cotta and Godly John', in S. Bhayro and C. Rider (eds), *Demons and Illness: Theory and Practice from Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (forthcoming).

¹²¹ Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, 61–72. Cotta referred to three cases of suspected bewitchment. In the first, dating from 1602, he was asked to investigate the strange fits of a poor boy at Pytchley (though unnamed, probably at the instigation of Anne (d. 1627), the wife of Sir Euseby Isham (1552–1626), who served as high sheriff of Northamptonshire in 1584) (72). The other two cases date from 1608 and are discussed more fully in what follows.

inspired dispossession of the Northwich demoniac Thomas Harrison (for whom, see above, 46), and was in the process of returning to this area in order to carry on the work of witch-hunting at the time of the publication of his treatise on witchcraft in 1617.¹²² In between, he had served as vicar of Holy Trinity at Coventry (1604–10), where he claimed to have uncovered a nest of ‘hellish sorcerers’. However, much to his regret, his attempt to persuade the eminent local puritan Sir John Hales to use the death of his wife as an opportunity to ‘commend such observations to Posteritie’ fell on deaf ears.¹²³ Whether Cotta was responsible for undermining Cooper’s crusade against witches in Coventry is impossible to determine with any certainty, but the fact that Hales was a former patient and long-standing friend of the Cotta family suggests he may have exerted cautionary influence on this occasion.¹²⁴ Shortly after these events, Cooper resigned his living and departed the city, having fallen out with the puritan rulers of what one contemporary described as this ‘second Geneva’.¹²⁵

If Cooper’s *Mystery of Witchcraft* was intended as a riposte to the sceptical overtones of Cotta’s own work on witchcraft, a major area of contention between the two men was the issue of how best to determine the guilt of witches. Cotta, as we have seen, was dismissive of what he termed the ‘superstitious’ practices of many witch hunters, and to some degree Cooper shared these concerns. Like Cotta, he rejected the use of pricking, ducking, and the burning of objects such as hair, which he likened to other forms of illicit magic or witchcraft. But the two men differed radically in their estimation of proof based upon the search for the devil’s mark, evidence that was essential in Cooper’s eyes if prosecutions under the new witchcraft statute were to be secured.¹²⁶ Cotta’s differences with the cleric, Cooper,

¹²² Cooper, *Mystery of Witchcraft*, A3r–v, A4r. Cooper dedicated this work to the mayor and corporation of the city of Chester (where he had lectured briefly in 1600) as well as the magistrates of Cheshire, among whom he singled out for special mention Mr Warburton of Arly and Mr Marbury of Mere. The former was in all probability the Cheshire gentleman, Sir Peter Warburton (c.1540–1621), another protégé of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester. His son, also Peter, was named as the executor of the will of the Northwich lecturer Thomas Pierson (d. 1633), who played a central role in the dispossession of Thomas Harrison: *ODNB*, sub Warburton, Sir Peter; Eales, ‘Thomas Pierson and the Transmission of the Moderate Puritan Tradition’, 95.

¹²³ Cooper, *Mystery of Witchcraft*, 14, 16, 249–50. For a summary of Cooper’s career and writings, see *ODNB*, sub Cooper, Thomas.

¹²⁴ The connection between the Hales and the Cottas was long-standing. In his will, John Hales (d. 1572), uncle of Cotta’s patient, Sir John Hales, made several bequests to Cotta’s father, Peter, whom he described as his ‘servant’. His heir Sir John was a staunch puritan whose house in the White Friars, Coventry, temporarily sheltered the press responsible for publishing the Marprelate tracts in 1590. Sir John also had strong links with the godly of Northamptonshire, being related through marriage to one of the county’s leading puritans, Sir Richard Knightley. Cotta subsequently described Sir John, who died after overdosing on *aurum potabile*, as ‘my honoured friend in true piety, generosity, integrity of life, in love of Vertue and Learning’: Hasler (ed.), *House of Commons, 1558–1603*, ii, 238–9; TNA, PROB 11/55, fos 56r–57r [will of John Hales, 27 December 1572; proved 5 February 1572/3]; Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 394; Cotta, *Cotta Contra Antonium*, 93.

¹²⁵ For Coventry’s reputation as a ‘second Geneva’, see G. Ornsby (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Cosin*, 2 vols (Durham, Surtees Soc., 52 and 55, 1868–72), i, 66. For an attack on the city’s ‘giddy heads’ in the year of Cooper’s departure, see the preface by archdeacon Samuel Hinton to F. Holyoake, *A Sermon of Obedience Especially unto Authoritie Ecclesiasticall* (Oxford, 1610).

¹²⁶ Cooper, *Mystery of Witchcraft*, 70, 272, 275–7. Typically, Cooper shared the reservations of Cotta and other puritans about the legitimacy of any form of white witchcraft. Like Cotta, he was also a

however, were as nothing when compared to the approach taken by the godly magistrates of Northamptonshire in 1612. In that year, a dramatic series of witch trials had taken place at Northampton, where many of the accused were subjected to a variety of ordeals and tests of which Cotta wholeheartedly disapproved. To make matters worse, these were granted wide publicity through the publication of an anonymous pamphlet describing the methods employed by the witch-finding magistrates.¹²⁷ Much of the inspiration for Cotta's discourse on witchcraft of 1616, foreshadowed in comments that he made in his attack on medical empirics in 1612, was almost certainly derived from his own experience of these trials and his early role in treating one of the alleged victims, Elizabeth Belcher.¹²⁸ It is highly probable, therefore, that one of his prime objectives in writing this work was to discourage godly magistrates from employing methods that smacked of 'superstition' and thus inadvertently promoted the Devil's cause.

The anonymous pamphlet recounting these trials refers to four local magistrates as most active in the prosecution of the witches. All were prominent figures among the godly clique that dominated the government of Jacobean Northamptonshire. Two in particular are worthy of further comment within the context of the current discussion, as both would appear to have authorized the application of a variety of witch-testing techniques that fellow puritans like Cotta roundly condemned. Sir Gilbert Pickering of Titchmarsh was responsible for swimming one of the suspected witches, Arthur Bill of Raunds, a practice that our anonymous author tentatively defended on the grounds that 'God hath appointed (for a supernaturall signe of the monstrous impiety of Witches) that the Element of water should refuse to receive them . . . that have shaken from them the sacred water of Baptisme.' Cotta devoted nine pages of his own treatise on witchcraft to an attempt to discredit this particular practice on religious and social grounds. He thus argued that it was theologically

firm advocate of the doctrine of callings, insisting that all, with a few exceptions, should confine themselves to their divinely allotted role in life: Cooper, *Worldlings Adventure*, 69–75.

¹²⁷ Anon., *The Witches of Northamptonshire* (London, 1612). In addition to this source, a short manuscript account of the trial, which both repeats and adds to our picture of proceedings at Northampton in 1612, survives in BL, Sloane MS 972, fo. 7. The relationship between the two is discussed in M. Gibson, 'Devilish Sin and Desperate Death: Northamptonshire Witches in Print and Manuscript', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 51 (1998), 15–21. In addition, a modern facsimile edition of the anonymous pamphlet is included in Gibson (ed.), *Early Modern Witches*, 158–72.

¹²⁸ Cotta alludes to his early investigation of Belcher's fits, which began some time around 1608, in his early work on empirics, and referred to the case again in 1616, when he reported that her original fits, which 'a reputed wizard' had claimed were caused by witches, had returned: Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, 61–70; Cotta, *Trial of Witch-craft*, 67. The wizard, elsewhere described as a 'beneficent physician', was almost certainly the astrological doctor Richard Napier (1559–1634), rector of Great Linford, Buckinghamshire. Napier, who initially diagnosed melancholy, was subsequently persuaded that Belcher was genuinely bewitched: Bodl., Ashmole MS 200, fo. 232v. Belcher was the wife of the minor playwright Dabridgecourt Belcher (1581–1621), who lived at Guilsborough, situated a few miles to the north of Northampton. According to Cotta, throughout her ordeal and after the trial and executions of the alleged witches, her family steadfastly refused to accept that she was bewitched. There may be some truth in this view, as the chief instigator would appear to have been her brother-in-law, William Avery (1588–1657), of Fillongley in Warwickshire, who also claimed to have been bewitched: for the Belchers and Averys, see J. Fetherstone (ed.), *The Visitation of the County of Warwick in the Year 1619* (London, Harleian Soc., 12, 1877), 47, 62, 65, 406–7. For the leading role played by Avery, see Anon., *Witches of Northamptonshire*, B3r–B4v.

suspect given Calvin's objections against the sacerdotal quality of the sacraments, including baptism, as well as socially disruptive, promoting popular disorder among the rude multitude. Cotta, it should be stressed, was firmly of the view that those who gave evidence in witchcraft cases should be 'worthy witnesses of undoubted and unstained credit and worth, free from all iust exception, of holy life, and unstained conversation'.¹²⁹ The actions of Pickering's associate Sir Thomas Brooke were, no doubt, equally suspect in Cotta's eyes. Brooke was responsible for the committal of Helen Jenkenson of Thrapston, who, immediately prior to her apprehension, was subjected by one Mistress Moulsho to a full body search 'to see if they could find that insensible marke which commonly all Witches have in some privy place or other of their bodies'. Brooke may or may not have authorized the search, but there is little doubt that the discovery of marks on Jenkenson's body was taken as sufficient proof of her guilt by this particular godly magistrate.¹³⁰

Both Pickering and Brooke were committed puritans. The former had long supported the puritan cause in the county and may have been related to the separatist leader Robert Browne. As a zealous anti-Catholic, Pickering was later knighted for his part in searching the homes of suspect local Catholics in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot.¹³¹ Brooke, on the other hand, was related to the puritan grandee Sir Edward Montagu (c.1562–1644), and was the patron of a number of puritan preachers, including the incumbent of his own parish of Great Oakley, Archibald Symmer. Six years after the witch trials at Northampton, Brooke and Montagu spearheaded the opposition of the county's puritan magistrates to the recently introduced Book of Sports while at the same time promoting the sanctity of the sabbath.¹³² Pickering's interest in witchcraft, moreover, was long-standing.

¹²⁹ Anon., *Witches of Northamptonshire*, Cv-C2v; Cotta, *Triall of Witch-craft*, 104–13 [quote at 110–11].

¹³⁰ Anon., *Witches of Northamptonshire*, Dv-D2r.

¹³¹ W. J. Sheils, *Puritanism in the Diocese of Peterborough, 1558–1610* (Northampton, Northampton Rec. Soc., 30, 1979), 12, 40; Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', 18. Pickering's home parish of Titchmarsh was seemingly a refuge for puritan preachers at the time of the 1612 witch trials. In 1611, the celebrated puritan preacher, John Dod (1550–1645), recently deprived of his living at Hanwell in Oxfordshire, was reported to be preaching to large congregations there: Haigh, *Plain Man's Pathways to Heaven*, 112. According to Shiels, Gilbert Pickering married Dorothy Browne, a member of the same gentry family as the separatist Robert Browne (d. 1633). In 1591, following his recantation and return to the Anglican fold, Browne was appointed to the living of Thorpe Achurch, the neighbouring parish to Titchmarsh, which he held until his deprivation in 1617. Given these connections, it is possible that he was the same as the clergyman Mr Browne, MA of Trinity College, Oxford, who in the manuscript account of pre-trial events in 1612 was asked to interrogate the accused witches imprisoned at Northampton: BL, Sloane MS 972, fo. 7. While Robert Browne the separatist had no known links with Oxford, I have not been able to trace any other clerical candidates in the county who fit this name and description. The Pickerings were not averse to courting controversy for their deep-seated puritanical beliefs. Gilbert's brother Lewis was severely punished in 1604 for his part in spreading a libel against the recently deceased archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, an act that brought him into close contact with the disaffected radical Thomas Bywater: see A. Bellany, 'A Poem on the Archbishop's Hearse: Puritanism, Libel and Sedition after the Hampton Court Conference', *Journal of British Studies*, 34 (1995), 137–64.

¹³² Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', 26, 77–8; A. Symmer, *A Spiritual Poesie for Zion. Or Two Decades of Observations Theologicall and Philosophicall* (London, 1629), A2r–A3r. In February 1612, and at the height of the witch scare, Robert Norbury, the aged rector of the neighbouring parish of Little Oakley, was presented in the church courts for having said (in

In the early 1590s he had played a central role in the successful prosecution of three witches at Warboys (in nearby Huntingdonshire), who were accused of bewitching the children of Pickering's sister, Elizabeth, the wife of Robert Throckmorton.¹³³ During the course of this long and protracted affair, Pickering had offered shelter to one of his nieces at Titchmarsh, where he subjected her to a series of 'experiments'. At the same time, he had continued to press his somewhat reluctant brother-in-law to pursue a more vigorous approach toward the women suspected of the crime, consistently advocating 'scratching' as a way of confirming their guilt. At Warboys, Pickering's enthusiasm for these novel methods was finally undermined by the intervention of another uncle of the bewitched children, Dr Francis Dorrington (d. 1611), who also happened to be rector of the parish.¹³⁴ Twenty years later, however, in his native Northamptonshire, where he sat on the local bench, Pickering was free to indulge his controversial demonological speculations, which, it would appear, were shared by others of his religious persuasion. Mistress Moulsho, for example, who took the lead in subjecting Helen Jenkenson to a body search as well as threatening to 'scratch out both her eyes' if she failed to unwitch her laundry, was almost certainly the wife or daughter of a local puritan gentleman, Francis Moulsho, who, like Sir Thomas Brooke, had close ties with Sir Edward Montagu, chief spokesman for the county's puritan governing elite.¹³⁵

There can be little doubt that Cotta perceived fellow puritans like Pickering and Brooke as 'unreconstructed' in their attitude to witchcraft.¹³⁶ Moreover, these were

1606) that he had 'given him self to the dyvell bodye and soule'. At the same time, he was accused of being a drunkard and fornicator: NRO, PDR CB43, fos 53v, 57r.

¹³³ For a recent account of the events at Warboys that adds little to our understanding of the wider religious and political context surrounding this case, see P. Almond, *The Witches of Warboys: An Extraordinary Story of Sorcery, Sadism and Satanic Possession* (London and New York, 2008). More helpful in this respect is A. R. DeWindt, 'Witchcraft and Conflicting Visions of the Ideal Village Community', *Journal of British Studies*, 34 (1995), 427–63. This case, which spawned a popular pamphlet, would appear to have exerted an important influence upon the participants in subsequent trials as well as those who sought to publicize such cases through print. Marion Gibson, for example, notes the influence of the Warboys pamphlet on the authors of those works concerned with the Northamptonshire witches: Gibson (ed.), *Early Modern Witches*, 158. For its impact on proceedings at North Moreton, Berkshire, in 1604–05, see Sharpe, *Bewitching of Anne Gunter*, 135–7.

¹³⁴ The leading role played by Gilbert Pickering at Warboys, alongside the frequent attempts by the afflicted to scratch their putative tormentors, is fully charted in the pamphlet account and would, I feel, repay closer study. Particularly relevant to my concerns here is the admission by the author of this pamphlet that Pickering himself was well aware of the reservations of 'some learned divines' on the admissibility of scratching as both a test of guilt and source of relief: Anon., *The Most Strange and Admirable Discoverie of the Three Witches of Warboys* (London, 1593), H3r.

¹³⁵ Anon., *Witches of Northamptonshire*, Dv-D2r. In 1612, at the time of the witch scare, Francis Moulsho of Thrapston, gent, along with Sir Edward Montagu, was named as an overseer and beneficiary in the will of his cousin, Robert Moulsho of Thingdon in Northamptonshire. The testator described Sir Edward as 'my dear and worthy friend' and was no doubt part of the loyal circle of puritan gentry, including Sir Thomas Brooke, that gravitated around the Montagus of Boughton: TNA, PROB 11/121, fos 376r–377r [will of Robert Mulsho, 5 January 1612/13; proved 5 May 1613]. For Sir Edward Montagu's role as 'the unacknowledged political leader of the gentry of eastern Northamptonshire for much of the period' and major patron of 'moderate' puritanism in the county, see Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', 24–5.

¹³⁶ The other two magistrates active in pursuing witches in Northamptonshire in 1612, Sir Thomas Tresham and Sir William Saunders, were also members of the county's gentry elite. Sir Thomas Tresham

not isolated examples of the susceptibility of puritan magistrates to what some like Cotta saw as superstitious practices embedded in unreformed, popular circles. Evidence from other trials dating from this and earlier periods suggests that these attitudes were in fact deeply engrained among the godly, including those empowered to investigate and prosecute suspected witches. A particularly good example can be found in the trial of a London witch, Anne Kerke, in late 1599 at the height of the Darrell controversy.¹³⁷ In that year, three London magistrates, Sir Richard Martin (1534–1617), Sir John Hart (d. 1604), and Sir Stephen Slaney (c.1524–1608), were responsible for examining the evidence against Kerke, who was accused of bewitching two children of George and Anne Nayler. Among a variety of incriminating techniques employed by the godly justices, Martin, who had heard it said that a witch's hair could not be cut, commanded that the trial be enacted on the suspect witch. When this failed, Martin further ordered that some of the witch's hair 'be put into the fire to burne it, but the fire flew from it, and the haire in the middest thereof unburnt'. Such preventative measures clearly owed more to popular ideas about witchcraft than they did to learned theology, and would no doubt have been rejected by many on these grounds (as, for example, by the puritan demonologist Thomas Cooper in 1617).¹³⁸ Martin and his two associates, however, would surely have baulked at the suggestion that they were prone to 'superstition'. All were prominent figures in the government of late Elizabethan London. The three men, for example, had served office as sheriff and lord mayor, and they were all either committed puritans or otherwise well connected to the city's puritan elite. Martin's role in the trial of 1599 is especially intriguing as twelve years earlier a grateful George Gifford had dedicated his first work on witchcraft, *A Discourse of the Subtill Practises of Devilles*, to the London goldsmith and banker. Gifford, surely, would not have approved of the methods used by Martin in 1599, as in this work and elsewhere he laboured to steer a middle path between the full-blown scepticism of Scot and the unfettered credulity that he associated with the poor and ignorant. In every other respect, however, Martin's

of Newton, responsible for indicting Mary Barber of Stanwick, was not, as inferred by Marion Gibson [*Early Modern Witches*, 172, n. 42], a Catholic, but rather a gentleman of impeccable puritan credentials. His wife, Anne, was the sister of John Cotta's patron, Sir William Tate, and it was no doubt through these connections that Cotta married the couple's daughter, also Anne, as his second wife in 1625: *ODNB*, sub Cotta, John. Sir Thomas, who served as high sheriff for the county in 1610, was notorious in some circles for the aggressive role that he played in the enclosure and depopulation of the area around Newton for which he was subsequently heavily fined: S. Hindle, 'Imagining Insurrection in Seventeenth-Century England: Representations of the Midland Rising of 1607', *History Workshop Journal*, 66 (2008), 21–2, 52n. Sir William Saunders of East Haddon and Cottesbrooke was an associate of the godly Treshams. He, too, may have had first-hand experience of witchcraft. Around the time he was seeking to purchase the lands of the deceased John Reade of Cottesbrooke, a complex business that involved agreement with his seven daughters and their heirs, Cotta was investigating claims that a gentlewoman, the 'sometimes daughter' of the said Reade 'then lying at Cottesbrooke', was bewitched: Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, 64; NRO, L(C)1603–20.

¹³⁷ Our knowledge of this trial derives exclusively from a brief account, hastily inserted at the last minute, to be found in one of the numerous anonymous pamphlets published about this time by the pro-Darrell camp: Anon., *The Triall of Maist. Dorrell, or A Collection of Defences against Allegations not yet Suffered to receive Convenient Answere* (Middleburg, 1599), 99–103.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 103; cf. Cooper, *Mystery of Witch-craft*, 272.

credentials as a lay spokesman for the godly were beyond reproach. Gifford himself had alluded to his unstinting support for godly causes and his 'zeale . . . towards the gospell', as evidenced in 'his love towards al those that publish and professe it'. Other leading apologists for the puritan cause such as Laurence Chaderton (d. 1640) praised him for his godliness and spiritual integrity, and lauded his exemplary contribution to the spiritual wellbeing of the commonwealth.¹³⁹ Moreover, in addition to patronizing godly ministers, Martin and his wife, Dorcas, also promoted a range of puritan interests and offered support to those whose dedication to the cause was deemed suspect by the government. In 1573, for example, they provided refuge in their house in Cheapside for the puritan firebrand Thomas Cartwright (c.1535–1603), then embroiled in the Admonition Crisis. Twelve years later they were sheltering various Scottish Presbyterian ministers from official persecution, and in 1589 their house was specifically identified by an informer as a likely haunt for those suspected of printing and disseminating the Marprelate tracts. At the same time, Martin was active in the persecution of Catholic priests, and was a fervent supporter of the puritan campaign to suppress playhouses in the capital.¹⁴⁰

Sir Richard Martin clearly occupied a strange no man's land as both a central figure in the government of London and a representative of the crown, who simultaneously belonged to a community of believers dedicated to undermining the religious settlement enshrined in law. He was clearly not alone, however, in attempting to balance these conflicting interests. Sir John Hart, whose house was the site of a number of experiments designed to prove the guilt of the witch Anne Kerke in 1599, was, like Martin, an important figure in the government of the city as well as an active puritan.¹⁴¹ In his will, he left a large sum of money to the puritan seminary of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and endowed a lecture at

¹³⁹ G. Gifford, *A Discourse of the Subtill Practises of Devilles* (London, 1587), A2v; L. Chaderton, *An Excellent and Godly Sermon, Most Needefull for This Time* [London, Paul's Cross, 26 October 1588] (London, 1578), Aii r–v. Elsewhere, Chaderton argued that witchcraft flourished in polities that lacked godly magistrates and in which there was no respect for hierarchy and callings. His private papers, which contain notes entitled 'De Daemonibus' and a letter from Edward Lively (c.1545–1605), Regius Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge, on the various meanings of witchery and sorcery, suggest he may have intended to publish on the subject: L. Chaderton, *A Fruitfull Sermon, upon the 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. and 8. Verses, of the 12. Chapter of the Epistle of S. Paul to the Romanes* (London, 1584), 19–20, 33, 82–3; LPL, MS 2550, fos 17, 18. Martin had strong connections with the French refugee church in London; the French-born minister Guillaume de Laune (William Lawne) dedicated his Latin edition of the abridged version of Calvin's *Institutes* (1583; English translation 1585) to him.

¹⁴⁰ Anon., 'A Just Censure and Reproofe of Martin Junior' (1589), in W. Pierce (ed.), *Marprelate Tracts, 1588, 1589* (London, 1911), 357; M. White, 'A Biographical Sketch of Dorcas Martin: Elizabethan Translator, Stationer, and Godly Matron', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 30 (1999), 775–92; T. Hill, *Anthony Munday and Civic Culture: Theatre, History, and Power in Early Modern London, 1580–1633* (Manchester, 2004), 35–6. White's article provides a wealth of valuable information regarding the Martins and supplements the brief description of Martin's life in the *ODNB*, which omits any mention of his puritanism and concentrates solely on his pioneering work at the Mint. White does not refer, however, to Martin's involvement in the witchcraft trial of 1599, which took place just a few months after his first wife's death. In addition to holding high office in the corporation of London (sheriff 1581–82; mayor 1588–89, 1593–94), Martin, who was knighted in 1589, also held the office of Master of the Mint from 1585 until his death in 1617.

¹⁴¹ Hart, a grocer by profession, succeeded Martin as lord mayor of London in 1589.

his parish church of St Swithin's, where he was responsible, as owner of the advowson, for presenting a number of puritan ministers to the living. In 1589, he was active in proceeding against illegal stage-players, and in 1600, along with Sir Richard Martin, he was appointed by the city to handle the aftermath of the defacing of Cheapside cross, an act of iconoclasm which the two men no doubt privately condoned.¹⁴² The third member of the triumvirate of magistrates who investigated and helped to successfully indict Anne Kerke for witchcraft in 1599 was Sir Stephen Slaney, who, while probably not a puritan, possessed strong puritan connections through his wife and business dealings.¹⁴³

As the various examples and case studies in this chapter suggest, belief in witchcraft and witch-hunting were deeply embedded in, and shaped by, the wider religious debates and preoccupations of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude, as some have done, that both the theoretical and practical aspects of demonological speculation were the preserve of any individual religious movement, sect, or denomination. While those loosely identified as puritans were commonly to be found promoting witchcraft trials, especially in relation to claims of demonic possession, there is little evidence to suggest unanimity among pre-civil war puritans with respect to such cases and the ideas that underpinned them. Puritanical zeal was not an essential ingredient of English witchcraft in the period before 1640, its influence on witch-hunting possibly magnified by the disproportionate emphasis that has been placed on published accounts of witchcraft trials at the expense of the many hundreds of cases about which we know very little. In similar fashion, it is important to remember that although puritan writers would appear to have monopolized discussion of the demonological ideas that sustained the trials, many did so in ways deliberately designed to cast doubt upon some of the central tenets of witch belief or leastwise to exert a moderating influence upon those, including judges and grand juries, who were required to oversee witch trials. Typical in this respect was the work of the prolific and influential Somerset puritan Richard Bernard (1568–1641), who in 1627 consciously invoked the sceptical strains of earlier puritan writers such as Cotta when he warned grand jurors to tread with care when prosecuting witches. Bernard's *Guide to Grand-Jury Men* offers valuable insights into the meaning and significance of witchcraft that stand in stark contrast to those found in more conventional demonological texts and pamphlets. Like Cotta, he feared the destabilizing impact of witchcraft accusations upon communities and the popular disorder that so often accompanied a witch panic, and

¹⁴² For Hart's career and political affiliations, see D. Hickman, 'Religious Belief and Pious Practice among London's Elizabethan Elite', *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), 956–8. Hart's home parish of St Swithin's was at this time a 'puritan stronghold': *ibid.*, 956.

¹⁴³ Hickman speculates that Slaney's wife was probably a puritan 'to judge by the works of divinity dedicated to her': D. Hickman, 'The Religious Allegiance of London's Ruling Elite, 1520–1603', PhD thesis (London, 1996), 274–5. Slaney served as lord mayor of London, 1595–96. One of his daughters, Elizabeth, married the Kentish gentleman and MP Samuel Lennard (c.1553–1618), who signed the petition of the suspended Kent ministers in 1584: Hasler (ed.), *House of Commons, 1558–1603*, ii, 462.

sought instead to utilize such fears in order to promote an exercise in communal soul-searching. In the process, his bitterest comments were reserved not for those suspected of witchcraft, but rather for those who claimed to be their victims. In this respect, Bernard was reflecting a strong current of thought in Protestant thinking that stressed the notion of godly immunity to the wiles of witches and demons, and argued instead that those most prone to witchcraft were the 'Carnall Gospellers, [and] such as Professe Religion, without the Power of Religion, Neutrals [and] Time-servers'. At the same time, in what must have seemed to some like an apology for witches, Bernard emphasized the idea that the Devil, if need be, often worked alone, and that if he did employ witches, those most likely to succumb to his wiles were the healers, blessers, and charmers whom the puritan physician Cotta had likewise identified as the greater threat to the peace of the commonwealth.¹⁴⁴ Puritan restraint in such matters was, in many respects then, typical of Protestant attitudes to magic and witchcraft across Europe, a product of the distinctive approach of Lutheran and Calvinist theologians to providence and misfortune, which in turn emphasized the role of the individual conscience in deciding how best to understand and confront the threat posed by witches.¹⁴⁵

The lack of consensus in puritan circles with regard to witchcraft was almost certainly mirrored in English society at large. Individuals, groups and whole communities often exhibited an extraordinary range of reactions to witchcraft that often appear inconsistent or contradictory to the modern observer. Bernard himself, for example, who in 1627 rejected the idea that the godly might be vulnerable to the assaults of witches, had nonetheless taken part in a dispossession at Nottingham two decades earlier (see above, p. 46n). Even more puzzling to many historians is the apparent scepticism exhibited by the royal Solomon, James I, following his accession to the English throne in 1603. During his reign, James became personally involved in a number of provincial witch trials, demonstrating a remarkable consistency of approach in seeking to expose what he saw as connivance and fraud. At no time, however, did the King dismiss the reality of witchcraft. Indeed, in other contexts, he displayed a remarkable willingness to promote and defend such beliefs. In 1613, for example, following the instigation of a high-profile enquiry into the alleged bewitchment of one of his courtiers, Robert Devereux, third earl of Essex (1591–1646), James openly rebuked his archbishop, George Abbot, for daring to question the reality of witchcraft. He not only scoffed at the archbishop's 'puritanism' for attempting to judge all such phenomena by the Bible

¹⁴⁴ R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jury-Men* (London, 1627), 9–11, 183. Bernard's debt to Cotta (see, for example, 11–22, 97–8) and Scot (32–4, 96) is evident throughout the book despite his protestation in the preface to have written the work to dispel a rumour that he 'favoured Witches, or were of Master Scots erroneous opinion, that Witches were silly deceived Melancholickes' (A3v–A4r). Moreover, like Cotta, Bernard was keen to place the prosecution of witches on firm legal foundations. He nonetheless dissented from the godly physician on the exact evidentiary grounds that might be applied, asserting against Cotta the existence of the witch's mark as the ultimate proof of guilt (218–19).

¹⁴⁵ See especially S. Clark, 'Protestant Demonology: Sin, Superstition, and Society (c. 1520–c. 1630)', in B. Ankarloo and G. Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford, 1990), 45–81 and Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 445–56, 472–88, 497–500.

alone, but he reminded him that the Devil had invented a whole host of new tricks and stratagems since the days of the early Church, many of them to be found in his recently published work on the subject.¹⁴⁶

Attitudes towards the subject of witchcraft then were clearly not set in stone. To a large extent, the response to witchcraft was conditioned by a combination of factors, including religious allegiance, the significance of which often varied according to time and place. Just as critically, attempts to invoke witchcraft and prosecute witches might act in one of two ways that were mutually incompatible. On the one hand, it might function as an *integrative* force in the community, reinforcing normative behaviour and the religious and political status quo. On the other, it might act in a *subversive* role, particularly when invoked by individuals or groups critical of those in authority. The punishment of witches, then, might on occasion promote cohesion and unity in early modern communities, reaffirming the dominant political and religious values of the ruling group. Alternatively, it might serve as a vehicle for criticism and complaint, and provide a suitable opportunity for malcontents to vent their dissatisfaction with, and opposition to, the governing elite. Whatever the case, the figure of the witch undoubtedly constituted a sign of divine disapproval, though how that sign was to be construed ultimately depended on a variety of contingent factors, very few of which were directly related to the specific accusations or evidence levelled against the witch.

On certain occasions then, it seemed provident to downplay the threat posed to society by witches, while at others it made perfect sense to prosecute such evildoers. A key factor here, as a number of the examples already cited in this chapter suggest, was the presence or absence of religious conflict and partisan divisions within a given community. As a rule, witchcraft was more likely to be taken seriously by local magistrates in communities destabilized by conflict and controversy, while ignored or overlooked in those where relative harmony or order prevailed. Puritan Northamptonshire provides an excellent example of this process in action. For much of the Jacobean period, the government of the county was dominated by a small coterie of puritan gentry families who were largely secure in their grip on power. Few trials would appear to have taken place in this period, and when accusations were made, as for example at Badby in 1608, no less a person than Sir Richard Knightley (1533–1615), lord of the manor and leader of the county's

¹⁴⁶ BL, Titus MS 107, fos 101, 104r. The royalist letter-writer James Howell (d. 1666), writing in 1647, claimed that 'King James a great while was loth to believe there were Witches', but was subsequently convinced by the case of the bewitchment of the earl of Rutland's children in 1618–19: J. Howell, *Epistolae Ho-Eliaanae*, ed. J. Jacobs, 2 vols (London, 1890–92), ii, 551. The earl was a senior figure and trusted servant at court. If James' faith in the reality of witchcraft was reaffirmed by this case, the absence of any puritanical motive behind the prosecution and execution of three women for this crime may have been significant. The earl's family was however tainted by associations with Catholicism, and the local area would appear to have been a hotbed of recusancy. At nearby Knipton (located in the shadow of Belvoir Castle) in 1620, for example, the local minister Thomas Appleyard was widely calumniated as a 'capcrosse' (i.e. one that pulled off his cap to the cross) and one guided by a 'Jesuited spirit': LRRO, 1D 41/13/50, fo. 197v. For recent studies of this important case, see M. Honeybone, *Wicked Practise & Sorcery: The Belvoir Witchcraft Case of 1619* (Buckingham, 2008); T. Borman, *Witches. A Tale of Sorcery, Scandal and Seduction* (London, 2013).

puritan elite, stepped in to provide the accused woman with a certificate of good standing. The parish of Badby, it is worth noting, had experienced much discord in the period immediately prior to these events. Divisions focused on two groups, one seeking to defend the ceremonial and liturgical practices enshrined in the Book of Common Prayer while the other, a committed caucus of puritan zealots, sought successfully to impose its will on the parish and minister. It was probably no coincidence, therefore, that the attempt to prosecute another witch in the village in 1606 was promoted by one of the leaders of the beleaguered conservative faction in the parish, William Goodman.¹⁴⁷ In comparison, the political situation facing the puritan governors of the county in 1612, when five witches were executed and many others arrested and imprisoned at Northampton, was very different. The witch panic of that year, which as we have seen was largely promoted by a cadre of puritan magistrates in the county, coincided with a major crackdown against nonconformity in the diocese of Peterborough that was instigated from the centre and imposed with zeal by a proto-Arminian group of clergy led by Bishop Thomas Dove (1555–1630).¹⁴⁸ Again, it was probably no coincidence that of the various parishes that produced witches in 1612, only one, Thrapston, had a tradition of lay puritanism; the rest would appear to have been conformable and, in the eyes of the puritan magistracy, unreformed and disorderly.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ NRO, PDR, A16, 151, 177, 185; CB40, fos 276v, 286r. Christopher Haigh dates these 'stirs' at Badby to 1600 and claims that when William Goodman's year of office as churchwarden came to an end in that year, 'the professors and the profane were able to live together peaceably again': Haigh, *Plain Man's Pathways to Heaven*, 133–5. The evidence of the church court records for the first decade of the seventeenth century, however, suggests otherwise. Conflict continued for the next five years, culminating in a physical attack on the minister of Badby, Ralph Heywood, in 1605; NRO, PDR, CB37, fos 95r, 95v, 115v, 168v, 238r; CB38, fos 114r, 284r.

¹⁴⁸ Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', 67–8. As a further illustration of the connection between witch-hunting and religious conflict, see the case of the parish of Denton, where in January 1605, amid a new campaign against puritan dissidents, the minister Mr Randleson was presented for not wearing the surplice. At the same time, one of his parishioners, Agnes Casson, was prosecuted for witchcraft, for which she underwent penance in Northampton. A year earlier, Randleson had been accused by David Owen (d. 1623), a staunch supporter of Bishop Dove's campaign to enforce conformity and proto-Arminianism, of preaching false doctrine by asserting that baptism was not essential to salvation: *ODNB*, sub Owen, David; NRO, PDR, CB38, fos 23v–24r, 31r. Owen, as bishop's surrogate, also presented one of the churchwardens of Denton for neglecting to present Randleson for his various indiscretions; *ibid.*, fo. 181r.

¹⁴⁹ The accused witches in the 1612 scare were drawn from two areas on the western and eastern fringes of the county associated with religious conservatism. In the former, Guilsborough, Ravensthorpe, and Yelvertoft were ideally suited to puritanical evangelization. The living of Guilsborough was held by an aged pluralist, Nicholas Cartmell (c.1546–1626), Ravensthorpe was a local centre of recusancy dominated by the Britton family, and the minister of Yelvertoft, John Harrison (d. 1661), was later sequestered for disaffection to Parliament. The paucity of presentments from these three parishes in the local church courts in the first two decades of the seventeenth century suggests complacency and religious conservatism. Yelvertoft was the home parish of three suspected witches, Alice, Jane, and Agnes Wilson, who are fleetingly alluded to in the manuscript account of the trials, but not in the printed version. For their incarceration at Northampton and reference to their place of origin, see NRO, PDR, CB42, 109, 131. The other witches accused in 1612 emanated from the villages of Stanwick, Raunds, and Thrapston in the east of the county. Stanwick was the seat of the Leverich family, who presented the puritan Robert Travell to Weston Favell near Northampton. The parish itself, however, was probably unresponsive to puritanism. Richard Cleburne (d. 1623), minister from 1608 until 1623, was in all probability a

Interestingly, much the same combination of factors would appear to have underpinned events in neighbouring Leicestershire in 1616, where another local witch hunt threatened to spiral out of control against a background of growing religious conflict. In that year, a young boy named John Smith, the son of a puritan gentleman from Husbands Bosworth, close to the Northamptonshire border, acquired local fame as a witchfinder and was responsible for the execution of nine women at Leicester. More would undoubtedly have suffered the same fate but for the personal intervention of the King, who was almost certainly persuaded of the innocence of the women because of the religious background of those promoting Smith's activities.¹⁵⁰ John Smith was in fact the son of Roger Smith (d. 1655) and grandson of Erasmus Smith (c.1533–1615), who owned the manor of Husbands Bosworth as well as the advowson of the parish church. The village had a long tradition of clerical puritanism, reflecting the religious leanings of the Smiths as well as the pronounced puritan sympathies of this part of south Leicestershire focused on the town of Market Bosworth. The young demoniac, moreover, was the nephew of the celebrated puritan preacher Henry 'silver-tongued' Smith.¹⁵¹ As in Northamptonshire in 1612, the catalyst for the 1616 witch panic in neighbouring Leicestershire was almost certainly a brief but intense period of anti-puritan activism initiated by the new bishop of Lincoln, Richard Neile (1562–1640). The clampdown began in 1615 and reached its peak a year later with a concerted attempt by the Arminian bishop and his surrogates, who included Sir John Lambe (c.1566–1646), to stamp out clerical dissent. Lambe, who would appear to have taken the lead in exposing the fraudulent fits and subsequent accusations of John Smith, was widely reviled and feared by the puritans of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. Indeed, while Lambe was busy exposing bogus witchfinders in the former county, the godly of Northampton were forwarding a list of complaints to

conservative conformist. In his will of 1623 he left a gold ring and a mourning gown to his old colleague at Sidney Sussex College, Dr John Pocklington (d. 1642), a prominent crypto-Catholic who later provided unstinting support to the Arminian cause: H. I. Longden (ed.), *Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy*, 16 vols (Northampton, 1938–43), iii, 151. The church court records for the period say little of Raunds. More interesting is Thrapston, where in early 1612 the ecclesiastical authorities would appear to have clamped down on itinerant preachers in the parish: NRO, PDR, CB43, fos 42v, 43v.

¹⁵⁰ Unfortunately, the assize records for the Midland circuit do not survive for this period. For much of our information on events at Husbands Bosworth and Leicester, we are therefore dependent on the account to be found in the letters of Robert Herrick of Leicester to his brother, Sir William Herrick (1562–1653), a London businessman: Bodl., MS. Eng. hist. c. 475, fos 113, 117 [18 July 1616; 15 October 1616]; reprinted in J. Nichols, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, 4 vols (London, 1795–1815), ii, pt 2, 471. See also *CSPD, 1611–1618*, 398.

¹⁵¹ For the Smiths of Husbands Bosworth, see J. M. Lee and R. A. McKinley (eds), *VCH, Leicestershire*, vol. 5 (London, 1964), 30–3. For the hugely popular preacher Henry Smith (c.1560–1591), see *ODNB*, sub Smith, Henry and R. B. Jenkins, *Henry Smith: England's Silver-Tongued Preacher* (Macon, GA, 1983). The rector of the parish of Husbands Bosworth in 1616 was the moderate puritan divine James Duport (d. 1617 or 1618), who was non-resident. The various curates who served the parish in his absence were often cited in the local church courts for nonconformity. Early in the seventeenth century, for example, one Hall was presented in the consistory court for consistently failing to wear the surplice and perform the full service according to the Book of Common Prayer: LAO, Dioc/box 58/2/67. The strength of puritanism in the area around Husbands Bosworth is discussed in C. D. Chalmers, 'Puritanism in Leicestershire, 1558–1633', MA thesis (Leeds, 1962), 286–9.

Lord Chief Justice Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634) that focused on their recent ill treatment at the hands of their arch-enemy Lambe, the main architect of a similar campaign against dissent in the county of Northamptonshire.¹⁵²

Both the Northamptonshire and Leicestershire episodes formed part of a general upsurge of witchcraft trials in the middle years of the reign of James I. The infamous and widely publicized case of the Pendle witches in 1612 provided further ammunition for those wedded to the idea that witchcraft was an ever-present and growing threat in England at this time. However, by the end of James' reign, there was a discernible decline in the number of trials, which continued to shrink during the reign of James' successor and son Charles I. In the following chapter I argue that this brief hiatus in witch-hunting, accompanied by a corresponding dearth of published works on the subject, is worthy of a case study in its own right, providing as it does further valuable insights into the various ways in which religious and political developments helped to shape attitudes to witch beliefs and witch-hunting in the period immediately prior to the civil wars.

¹⁵² Ibid., 143–4, 145–6, 159–60. It should also be noted that Sir William and Robert Herrick, whose correspondence provides the main source for our knowledge of the witchcraft episode in 1616, were themselves closely aligned to the puritan leadership of the county in this period. The former provided financial and other support to the godly in Leicestershire, where he was lord of the manor of Beaumanor, and related to John Herrick, mayor of Leicester, 1619–20. His wife Joan, the sister of the privy councillor, Humphrey May, was an outspoken Presbyterian, who was later accused of iconoclasm: *ODNB*, sub Herricke, Sir William; Chalmers, 'Puritanism in Leicestershire', 219–21. Robert was later prosecuted for holding a conventicle in his house in Leicester in 1633, while his brother James was deprived of his living at Thornton the following year: *ibid.*, 286. For the petition of the corporation of Northampton against Lambe addressed to Coke, see Fielding, 'Arminianism in the Localities', 102.

3

Witchcraft in an Age of Rebellion, 1625–1649

Where peace and concord is, there is God, and all that's good
Where strife and dissension is, there is the Devil and all that's evil.

Flyleaf of John Newte's copy of John Walker's *Sufferings
of the Clergy* (1714), cited in A. Welsford, 'Mr Newte's Library
in St Peter's Church, Tiverton', *Transactions of the
Devonshire Association*, 106 (1974), 18

INTRODUCTION

For reasons that have never been adequately explained, prosecutions for witchcraft in England continued to decline in the years following the accession of Charles I in 1625. Unlike his father, Charles showed little interest in the subject of witches, an attitude that was seemingly shared by many of the judges and local magistrates whom he appointed. It should not be assumed, however, that a lack of judicial engagement with witchcraft was indicative of a wider disinterest or even scepticism with regard to the subject. From the mid-1630s onwards, as the country became increasingly embroiled in religious and political conflict, concern with witches and witchcraft once again featured prominently in the general discourse of those who governed in Church and state. In due course it would also help to unleash the largest series of witch hunts in English history, focused on the eastern counties under parliamentary rule in the middle years of the 1640s. For much of that decade, demonological thinking permeated religious and political debate. Both in print and the pulpit, Englishmen and women were confronted on a daily basis with speculation concerning the active role of the Devil and witches, particularly in relation to the civil and religious crisis that was slowly engulfing the country in the wake of the collapse of royal authority. As I hope to show here and in subsequent chapters, this period was to mark a critical turning point in the fate of witchcraft in early modern English society, though the changes that it initiated were barely discernible at the time.

In this chapter, I seek to explore the significance of the period from about 1625 to 1649, coinciding with the reign of Charles I, for our understanding of the general role played by witchcraft in early modern English culture, as well as to suggest a number of ways in which developments in this period were critical in

laying the foundations for the decline of witch beliefs and witch trials in England in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In particular, I hope to demonstrate the critical role that the subject of witchcraft played in this period as a vehicle of political legitimization. In an age of growing religious and political controversy that generated unprecedented anxiety and debate, protagonists on both sides in the civil war sought to appropriate the rhetoric of witchcraft in order to persuade their fellow citizens of the righteousness of their cause. In the case of those who defended the status quo in Church and state, this is most evident in their constant recourse to biblical texts equating the activities of rebels and witches. Their opponents, on the other hand, repeatedly invoked the language of demonology in order to stigmatize those who supported the royalist and Anglican cause as religious apostates who, like witches, had turned from the true path. The wide dissemination of such views at both local and national level and through a wide variety of media (sermons, letters, newspapers) almost certainly increased speculation concerning the activities of 'real' witches, culminating in a series of trials that took place in East Anglia in the mid-1640s under the guidance of the self-styled 'witchfinder general' Matthew Hopkins. The Hopkins trials, and associated speculation concerning the role of the Devil in revolutionary England, were destined to play a vital role in determining the fate of witchcraft beliefs in the second half of the seventeenth century. They also provide the context for renewal of debate surrounding the reality of witchcraft in post-civil war England, particularly in relation to the wider political and religious concerns that stimulated 'sceptics' like Robert Filmer and Thomas Ady to venture into print in the 1650s.

In Chapter 4 I aim to illustrate how the ideas of men like Filmer, Ady, and others were shaped by these broader concerns and in the process further eroded the confidence of many within the ruling elite, especially those destined to resume the reins of power after 1660, in witchcraft as a viable agent of political legitimization. By the time of the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, opponents of the republican regimes of the previous decade increasingly depicted witch-hunting and support for traditional notions of diabolical witchcraft as an adjunct of sectarian 'enthusiasm'. Real 'witches' were no longer to be found among the poor and ignorant. Instead, in royalist and mainstream Anglican circles, they were redefined as a form of political renegade, whose rebellious activities represented a far greater threat to the health of the restored body politic than those ascribed to the traditional figure of the witch. The response of those who held sway in the 1650s to such sentiments was equally ambiguous. For while many continued to defend conventional wisdom with regard to the existence of witches and the nature of witchcraft, they increasingly cast the figure of the witch in the mould of those spiritual apostates who dared to propose their own specific vision of the true faith. The growth of sectarianism in the 1640s and 1650s, and the failure of successive governments to create a single, national Church to which all Englishmen and women might subscribe, thus facilitated that process whereby the spokesmen of particular religious groups sought to vindicate their own righteousness by stigmatizing their opponents as what I have termed elsewhere 'surrogate witches'. In short, the religious and political crisis in England in the 1640s and 1650s in the

aftermath of civil war represented the first stage in the creation of a pluralistic state that was ultimately inimical to traditional notions of witchcraft, which had previously flourished in polities where religious and political authority was largely uncontested.

THE DECLINE OF WITCH-HUNTING IN PRE-CIVIL WAR ENGLAND

One of the reasons why the Hopkins trials stand out so starkly as a blot on the landscape of the English past relates to the relative paucity of witchcraft trials in England in the previous two decades. The marked decrease in such activity, combined with the growing tendency of juries to find those accused of witchcraft not guilty or with no case to answer, has led some historians to impute this process to the changing religious and political climate inaugurated by the early Stuarts. James I, as we have seen, has been widely perceived as a convert to the cause of the sceptics, his exposure of a series of frauds and impostures cited as an important factor in cultivating a growing unwillingness to prosecute witches among the ruling elite. What James set in motion, his son Charles perpetuated. During the first fifteen years of Charles I's reign, prosecutions for witchcraft on the home circuit (that for which we possess the fullest records) dwindled to a trickle. At the same time, publications on the subject followed a similar trajectory. As Marion Gibson has noted, no pamphlet accounts of witchcraft trials appeared between 1621 and 1643.¹ Superficially, at least, these developments would appear to go against the grain of what one might expect in a state that was increasingly governed along 'absolutist' lines. Stuart Clark, for example, has persuasively argued that the crime of witchcraft was repeatedly associated by demonologists, political commentators, and others with the notion of charismatic rule in a divinely ordained polity.² How then ought we to account for this apparent anomaly?

A number of lines of enquiry are suggested here, though all require further study. One relates to the emergence of a new force in English religion in this period, Arminianism, which by the 1630s was close to achieving dominance in the upper echelons of the Church of England. From the first decade of the seventeenth century, early converts to Arminianism such as Samuel Harsnet were in the forefront of the Anglican hierarchy's attempt to discredit the puritans and their claims to exorcize demoniacs. Later, civil lawyers like Sir John Lambe (c.1566–1646), who occupied a string of important offices in the administration of the Church in the east Midlands, actively combined support for the new ceremonialism associated with Arminianism with opposition to witch-hunting.³

¹ M. Gibson (ed.), *Early Modern Witches: Witchcraft Cases in Contemporary Writing* (London and New York, 2000), 302.

² S. Clark, *Thinking With Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), esp. 549–682.

³ For Lambe's role in the exposure of the puritan demoniac at Leicester in 1616, see above, 67.

During the 1630s, few of Charles' bishops showed any great concern with witchcraft, Archbishop Laud himself rarely demonstrating anything other than a superficial interest in the subject. To what extent, however, such disinterest should be interpreted as a sign of engrained scepticism on the part of those sympathetic to the ceremonial and doctrinal reforms favoured by Charles I is open to question. A particularly intriguing example of 'grass roots' Arminians engaging with witchcraft and diabolism is manifest in the religious self-help groups that functioned in the household of Nicholas Ferrar (1593–1637) at Little Gidding in the early 1630s. Here, it was common practice for the whole family, women as well as men, to read and discuss religious works with a view to promoting their distinctively ascetic approach to life and faith within the confines of what contemporaries described as the 'Arminian nunnery'. On one occasion when the family were discussing the reality of diabolical temptation and the Devil's actual appearance before those whose souls he attempted to capture, various contemporary witchcraft pamphlets, including those relating to recent cases at Pendle in Lancashire and King's Lynn in Norfolk, were cited as 'certaine proofs and experiments'.⁴ What attracted the devotees at Little Gidding to such stories, however, was not so much the crimes committed by the witch as the manner in which the victim of the Devil's assaults resisted, or, as in the case of Mary Smith, the King's Lynn witch, how those who were successfully prosecuted for witchcraft subsequently repented for their actions. The idea of universal grace, a central feature of Arminian doctrine, was thus able to incorporate witchcraft, even if few of its clerical exponents felt the need to expatiate at length on the subject. This is evident, for example, in the work of the Cambridge theologian George Langford, who in 1620 set out to show that all men, even sinners like the Hebrew king Manasseh, who 'gave himself to Witchcraft, and to charming', might be saved.⁵ It is also apparent in the writings of one of the leading spokesmen for the Arminian cause, John Cosin (1595–1672), who routinely lambasted those who visited wise women and wizards for comfort and blamed maleficent witches for their misfortunes. He described such actions as a form of religious apostasy and an offence against the first table, and in so doing would appear to have differed little from the viewpoint adopted by some of his puritan adversaries, who consistently castigated those who employed the services of white witches.⁶ In similar fashion, the church courts under Laud and his Arminian

⁴ E. C. Sharland (ed.), *The Story Books of Little Gidding Being the Religious Dialogues Recited in the Great Room, 1631–2, from the Original Manuscript of Nicholas Ferrar* (London, 1899), 228–30. As further evidence of the Devil's appearance 'in these last and evill daies of ours', one of the group referred to the case of the diabolical temptation of Katherine, wife of the Anglican moralist Philip Stubbes (c.1555–c.1610), whose published life of his wife went through twenty-eight impressions by 1664: see P. Stubbes, *A Christal Glasse for Christian Women* (London, 1592).

⁵ G. Langford, *Manassehs Miraculous Metamorphosis* [Cambridge, 10 September 1620] (London, 1621). The rest of this sermon is a scathing attack on puritans ('our cold friends that gad and go astray to Amsterdam') and their excessive reliance on predestination, as well as a defence of divine right episcopacy. For the politically sensitive nature of citations relating to King Manasseh, see below, 105–6.

⁶ J. Cosin, *The Works of the Right Reverend Father in God John Cosin, Lord Bishop of Durham*, ed. J. Sansom, 5 vols (Oxford, 1843–55), i, 148–50; ii, 113. Keith Thomas, who cites the example of Cosin, also points to the relevance of surviving visitation articles from this period in order to show 'that

colleagues were no less vigilant than their puritan colleagues in prosecuting errant clergy who engaged in magical practices. Cosin himself, as prebend of Durham, would probably have been familiar with the case of John Vaux, minister at nearby Bishop Auckland, who was prosecuted in the Court of High Commission in 1633 for figure casting and related offences.⁷

If Arminianism was not responsible for initiating a sea change in attitudes to witchcraft, what role, we might ask, did central government play in this period, in particular the Stuart monarchy? Rather than promote the persecution of witches in order to propagate the power of an expanding state, as some have speculated, both James I and Charles I proved highly reluctant to sponsor witch-hunting. James, as we have seen, was frequently active in exposing fraud, and his son Charles would appear to have shown little interest in the subject. Such ‘moderation’ would appear to have been transmitted to the royal judges who oversaw witch trials. Not only did the logic of ‘descending authority’ dictate that assize judges were required to reflect the ‘scepticism’ of their royal paymasters, but in the case of James I at least, we have clear evidence of royal interference in the judicial process as it applied to the prosecution of witches. Sir Randolph Crewe (1559–1646), for example, who had risked disgrace in 1616 for overseeing the execution of witches at Leicester against James’ wishes, was careful not to repeat the error. In 1621, when another puritan attempt to appropriate witchcraft and exorcism for partisan ends at West Ham in Essex was once again exposed by the vigilant James as a fraud, Crewe was on hand to ensure that the conspirators were tried and punished at the local assizes.⁸ Other evidence from this period strongly suggests that wherever the agents of central government, be they the monarch or those closely involved in the day-to-day governance of the realm, encountered claims of witchcraft or related phenomena they consistently acted with caution and restraint. In 1622, for example, the judge overseeing the trial of various witches accused of bewitching the children of a Yorkshire gentleman, Edward Fairfax, exercised considerable influence over the jury in bringing in a not guilty verdict.⁹ During the reign of Charles I, if anything,

the Laudians had by no means abandoned the fight against popular magic’: K. V. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1971), 499–500.

⁷ W. H. D. Longstaffe (ed.), *The Acts of the High Commission Court within the Diocese of Durham* (Durham, Surtees Soc., 34, 1857), 34–42. For similar cases involving the vicars of Fleckney, Cambridgeshire (1637) and Shustocke, Warwickshire (1632), see R. Palmer, *The Folklore of Leicestershire and Rutland* (Wymondham, 1985), 74; Bodl., Rawlinson MS A 128, fo. 27.

⁸ For the cases at Leicester and West Ham, see above, 39. For an overview of Crewe’s career, which culminated in disgrace in 1626 when he led a delegation of judges before Charles I in opposition to the forced loan, see *ODNB*, sub Crew(e), Sir Randolph. Note, however, that Prest errs here in locating the 1616 trial in Lancashire.

⁹ Fairfax, who in the preface to his own account of this case claimed to be ‘neither a fantastic puritan or superstitious papist’, was nonetheless a puritan sympathizer and head of a godly household. This is evident, for example, in his employment of the puritan cleric and vicar of Leeds Alexander Cooke (1564–1632) as spiritual adviser to the family in the years of the girls’ alleged bewitchment: W. Grainge (ed.), *Daemonologia: A Discourse on Witchcraft, as It was Acted in the Family of Mr Edward Fairfax, of Fuyston, in the County of York, in the Year 1621* (Harrogate, 1882), 32, 37–9. Cooke himself was actively engaged at this time in conflict with a group of religious conservatives in his own parish, a dispute that led to a suit in the court of Star Chamber: *ODNB*, sub Cooke, Alexander;

official reluctance to acknowledge supernatural interference in the daily governance of the nation gathered momentum. In February 1630, for example, Thomas Paman of Suffolk was exposed as a fraud for claiming to have been bewitched by a local woman, Alice Read. The case was investigated by a local JP and details forwarded to the Council.¹⁰ Four years later, renewed accusations of witchcraft in the Pendle district of Lancashire in 1633–34 led to a full-scale enquiry, backed by the central government, which ultimately found the accused innocent of all charges.¹¹ When similar accusations of witchcraft were levelled at a Somerset woman two years later, the assize judges ordered not only that the accuser be prosecuted, but that the maligned party should be granted the full assistance of the court, including four prosecutors and one attorney, in order to pursue legal redress.¹² The incredulity of those in authority would also appear to have extended to supposed sightings of apparitions, as in the case of the mysterious appearance of a ghost at Minehead in Somerset in the late 1630s.¹³

England under the rule of Charles I then provides little evidence of that process, suggested by some historians of European witchcraft, whereby the early modern state was thought to have bolstered its growing power and authority through the pursuit and punishment of witches. But does the failure of Charles and his spiritual, political, and judicial advisers to promote witch-hunting signify, as some have claimed, a principled rejection of the belief in witchcraft *per se*? Here, I believe it is important to make a critical distinction between the *idea* of witchcraft and the

TNA, STAC 8/215/6; A. Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580–1720* (Cambridge, 2011), 172–6. Elsewhere, Cambers has argued persuasively for seeing this case as the product of a clash of religious cultures in a region still undergoing Protestant evangelization: A. Cambers, 'Print, Manuscript and Godly Culture in the North of England, c.1600–1650', PhD thesis (York, 2003), 191–236. For a brief summary of the Fairfax case, see C. L. Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London, 1933), 240–4; J. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550–1750* (London, 1996), 199–202.

¹⁰ CSPD, 1629–1631, 198–9. This case, previously unnoticed, was investigated by Sir Martin Stuteville of Dalham, Suffolk, who was probably responsible for sending the report to the Privy Council. Stuteville was a close friend and correspondent of the Cambridge scholar Joseph Mede (1586–1638). His death on 13 June 1631 is recorded in the diary of the local clergyman John Rous. The accuser, Thomas Paman, was probably a son of Robert Paman of Chevington (a few miles from Dalham), and thus brother to Henry Paman (1623–1695), an eminent lawyer and physician in Restoration Cambridge: BL, Harleian MSS 389, 390; M. A. E. Green (ed.), *The Diary of John Rous, Incumbent of Santon Downham, Suffolk, from 1625 to 1642* (London, Camden Soc., 66, 1856), 61.

¹¹ The case of the Lancashire witches has not been the subject of detailed study. For a useful summary of the 'sceptical' reaction of the authorities—judicial, ecclesiastical, and medical—to the accusations against the accused witches, a number of whom, along with their principal accuser, were re-examined in London in 1634, see A. Findlay, 'Sexual and Spiritual Politics in the Events of 1633–34 and *The Late Lancashire Witches*', in R. Poole (ed.), *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories* (Manchester and New York, 2002), 146–9.

¹² T. G. Barnes (ed.), *Somerset Assize Orders, 1629–40* (Frome, Somerset Rec. Soc., 65, 1959), 28; J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Western Circuit Assize Orders, 1629–1648: A Calendar* (London, Camden Soc., 17, 1976), 99. Cockburn supplies brief details of the legal careers of three of the accused witch's counsel.

¹³ P. Marshall, *Mother Leakey and the Bishop: A Ghost Story* (Oxford, 2007), 9–15. The loyal minister Henry Byam (1580–1669), who interviewed the Leakeys in 1637, dismissed the existence of apparitions on biblical grounds: H. Byam, *XIII Sermons: Most of Them Preached Before His Majesty King Charles II in His Exile* (London, 1675), 78–9.

ideological role it may have played for divine right rulers like Charles, and the *practice* of witch-hunting. Put simply, belief in witches did not necessitate constant action to secure their detection and eradication. This, I suggest, was particularly the case in politics such as England under the early Stuarts, where the divine and charismatic authority wielded by James I and Charles I may have operated to preclude the possibility that the body politic was infested with witches and demons. The mere presence of such ‘demigods’ on the throne was seemingly sufficient to guarantee a climate of official ‘scepticism’ with regard to witchcraft. Under such circumstances, for contemporaries to admit or suggest that the kingdom might have a witch problem ran the risk of encouraging some to question the legitimacy of the house of Stuart. Charles’ psyche in particular would appear to bear out this analysis. Possessed with a remarkable sense of his own legitimacy and godlike status, and convinced of the fact that he ruled over a kingdom in which order and harmony prevailed at all levels of government, Charles and his loyal vicegerents were instinctively averse to the idea that the Devil and his minions were an active presence and real threat to the peace of the kingdom.

The charismatic authority wielded then by Charles I does not appear to have acted as a catalyst for witch-hunting. Nonetheless, the idea of witchcraft as a vital adjunct to the ‘mystical politics’ that lay at the heart of Caroline absolutism remained prominent in other aspects of his rule. This is most evident perhaps in Charles’ patronage of that most *avant garde* of court entertainments, the masque, which, as Stuart Clark and others have demonstrated, was capable of expressing real as well as symbolic truths about the nature and governance of the body politic.¹⁴ While Clark has tended to focus on the potential utility of such performances as indicators of the sacral and mystical nature of politics in early Stuart England, it might be worth considering the extent to which the message of these elaborate and expensive court spectacles underscored the reluctance of James I, and especially Charles I, to engage in, or promote, witch-hunting. The essential and constantly reiterated purpose of such performances was to celebrate the quasi-magical or godlike ability of the monarch to quell and ultimately dispel the forces of Satanic evil that threatened, albeit briefly, to overwhelm the nation. In formulaic fashion, the main masque was usually preceded by an anti-masque in which witches, devils, and other agents of misrule figured prominently. Their reign was short-lived, however. Exposed to the presence and intervention of the King and his court, the forces of evil were dispelled in an instant, the sudden nature of the transition underscored by the use of state-of-the-art technical wizardry developed by the virtuoso stage designer Inigo Jones (1573–1652). Typical of the genre was the scene in Ben Jonson’s *Masque of Queens* (1609), in which the witches’ dance was interrupted by the sound of loud music, ‘as if many instruments had made one blast; with which not only the hags themselves but the hell into which they ran quite vanished, and the whole face of the scene altered, scarce suffering the memory of such a thing’. It is difficult to dissent with Martin Butler, who has described how

¹⁴ Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 76–8, 92–3, 644–8.

such moments helped to encapsulate 'the magic of monarchy and its seemingly effortless ability to banish subversion and enforce its will'.¹⁵

Similar storylines, featuring similar *dramatis personae* in the shape of a range of hellish figures, demons, sorcerers, and related types, were a staple of later masques, especially those written for Charles I. *Chloridia*, for example, performed in 1631, featured a cloven-footed dwarf who threatened to subject the earth to a range of meteorological catastrophes using weather magic. *Tempe Restored* (1632) and *Coelum Britannicum* (1634) opted instead to foreground classical witchcraft in the shape of the sorceress Circe, who uses her charms to turn men into beasts in the former, or to emasculate them in the latter. In *The Temple of Love* (1635), the anti-masque depicts witches and sorcerers alongside other evildoers including members of 'a sect of modern devils' who look suspiciously like contemporary puritans ('a sworn enemy of poesy, music, and all ingenious arts, but a great friend to murmuring, libelling, and all seeds of discord'). The obsession with a demonic other continued to feature in later performances, including those enacted at the end of the period of Personal Rule, when Charles I's kingdom, to most observers, seemed on the brink of collapse. Four witches and the Devil in the shape of a goat thus feature as characters in *Luminalia* (1638), while there is at least an intimation of a reality beyond the rarefied air of the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall in the last of the Stuart masques, *Salmacida Spolia*. Performed in January 1640, it features a 'malicious Fury' called Discord who appears in a storm, and 'proper to her evil use, having already put most of the world into disorder, endeavours to disturb these parts, envying the blessings and tranquillity we have long enjoyed'. As in all former cases, however, evil is vanquished and order restored by the personal appearance of the King, whose charismatic counter-magic proves too great for those who dare to challenge his authority. The enchanter and her wicked associates are thus 'on a sudden . . . surprised and stopped in their motion by a secret power [in the person of the King] whose wisdom they tremble at, and depart as foreknowing that wisdom will change all their malicious hope . . . into a sudden calm'.¹⁶

To what extent, we might ask, did such conceits, based as they were on a neoplatonic ideal that invested real authority in art forms 'not merely to express but to effect truths', inform Charles' understanding and governance of his kingdom?¹⁷ If they did reflect political reality, as some have suggested, then it is equally

¹⁵ B. Jonson, *The Masque of Queens*, ll. 28–353 [quote at ll. 319–20], reprinted in S. Orgel and R. Strong (eds), *Inigo Jones. The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, 2 vols (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1973), i, 132–5; M. Butler, 'The Court Masque', in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online*, http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/k/essays/court_msq_essay/2/, accessed 22 April 2015.

¹⁶ B. Jonson, *Chloridia*, ll. 98–61; A. Townshend, *Tempe Restored*, ll. 9–10 and *passim*; T. Carew, *Coelum Britannicum*, ll. 814–32; W. Davenant, *The Temple of Love*, ll. 153, 273–8, 298–9, 300–3; W. Davenant, *Luminalia: The Queen's Festival of Light*, ll. 213–14 W. Davenant, *Salmacida Spolia*, ll. 6–13. All of these masques are reprinted in Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones*, ii.

¹⁷ Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 647. For the influence of neoplatonism at the court of Charles I, see especially H. Vaughan, *Art and Magic in the Court of the Stuarts* (London and New York, 1994). Interestingly, in 1663, when the royalist James Heath (d.1664) came to write the history of the origins of the English civil war, he chose to describe the events of the late 1630s and early 1640s in terms that might have been taken directly out of one of Ben Jonson's masques: '[T]he whole kingdome of a

probable that they helped to inform the King's view of witchcraft (a non-existent threat), which, through the logic of 'descending authority', was cascaded down to those demi-gods or lesser magistrates who oversaw witchcraft trials. Whether or not Charles I did believe that his mere presence on the throne of England was sufficient to annul the Devil's influence over his subjects, especially through the employment of witches, is open to conjecture, but the general tenor of his court, manifest in sermons as well as masques, does suggest a reluctance to acknowledge the presence of such malevolent forces in his realm. Such thinking may account, for example, for the tendency of loyal preachers in the 1630s to minimize the threat posed by the Devil and witches to the commonwealth and to stress that in this current 'enlightened' age Satan was forced to resort to alternative stratagems, usually in the habit of an 'angel of light', in order to work his evil.¹⁸

Under such circumstances then, the acknowledgement of a witch problem, manifest in witch trials, might lead some to question the 'magical' efficacy, and hence legitimacy, of the monarch. Surely what is crucial here is Charles I's remarkable sense of his own godlike status, and the fact that in his eyes he ruled over a kingdom in which order was preordained, echoing precisely the kind of political harmony that so often featured in the masques performed at court, in which he, his family, and close entourage routinely participated. That such thinking bred political complacency and made it difficult for Charles and his advisers to react effectively to the growing political crisis of the last years of the Personal Rule seems beyond question. It may also have informed his reluctance to perform what some have seen as yet another vital adjunct of his charismatic authority, and hence symbol of legitimacy, the royal touch for scrofula. As Stuart Clark has shown, the ability to heal in this way was closely related to the idea of the ruler as exorcist, whose thaumaturgical powers to heal the sick also extended to an ability 'to drive away evil from (and so "heal") the entire commonwealth'.¹⁹ Charles I's apparent dereliction of his duty to touch for the King's evil runs counter to what one might expect of a divine right monarch in this period. Quite why he proved so resistant to the practice—one that, as commentators have noted, he rapidly resumed in the changed political atmosphere of the 1640s—is open to further analysis and debate. Kevin Sharpe, for example, has intimated that Charles' reluctance to touch was probably related to his general antipathy for any activities at court that promoted

suddain, as if some Magical Charme had transform'd the State and the shape of it, seemed rather a Scene or boscaige of Wild and brutall Creatures, than a Governed or civil Community': [J. Heath], *Flagellum: Or the Life and Death, Birth and Buriall of Oliver Cromwell the Late Usurper* (London, 1663), 21.

¹⁸ See, for example, J. Cooper, *The Foolish Prophets Displayed* (London, 1638), Br-v. For the Devil transformed into an angel of light, see 2 Corinthians 11:14. Such was the overwhelming faith of some preachers in Charles' qualities as a ruler that they found it impossible to conceive of any effective opposition to his rule. Speaking in 1635, John Featley argued that the King and his bishops had eradicated all religious opposition to Church and state, for even those sectaries who 'formerly swarmed in this our Kingdome' are now abated, 'the care of those who watch over us [having] corrected the furie of their publike disorder': J. Featley, *Obedience and Submission. A Sermon Preached at St Saviours-Church in Southwarke* [8 December 1635] (London, 1635), 10.

¹⁹ Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 661.

and encouraged unseemly scenes of disorder. Others have echoed these views without providing firm evidence of the rationale for the King's reluctance to practise charismatic healing.²⁰ It is possible, of course, that this particular divine right monarch may have felt little obligation to touch in a polity that he believed to be orderly, well governed, and one in which the sick were otherwise adequately catered for. Whatever the case, it would appear that Charles' failure to touch for much of his reign created a vacuum that others were only too eager to fill. It is equally apparent that many would appear to have been motivated to do so for either religious or political motives, their activities closely monitored by the various agencies of the state. The Frenchman Boisgandre, for example, was closely allied to a leading English recusant family, while the Chelsea market gardener and putative seventh son James Leverett (1585–c.1663) was widely suspected of promoting his cures in order to disparage the religious and political authority of the King. Charles' government took a keen interest in such men whose actions were widely seen as seditious. Leverett, for example, was hauled before Star Chamber and subjected to close interrogation at the hands of the officers of the College of Physicians. Despite the proliferation of such 'competitors' in the late 1630s, however, Charles I remained steadfastly reluctant to use his gift of healing for the benefit of his subjects.²¹

WITCHCRAFT, PROVIDENTIALISM, AND THE PERSONAL RULE OF CHARLES I

If Arminianism and divine right monarchy, as promoted by Charles I, inhibited the prosecution of witches prior to the outbreak of civil war in 1642, there is little evidence to suggest that either were inimical to belief in witchcraft per se. Both impostors, Boisgandre and Leverett, were suspected of using sorcery and enchantments in perpetuating their frauds, and as we shall see, recourse to the language of demonic witchcraft was to form an important aspect of the rhetoric of royalism in the 1640s and beyond. The idea of witchcraft thus remained highly amenable as a vehicle to promote the values of political unity and religious harmony. In

²⁰ K. Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven and London, 1992), 217, 631, 642–3, 782; J. Richards, "His Nowe Majestie" and the English Monarchy: The Kingship of Charles I before 1640', *Past and Present*, 113 (1986), 86–94. For an alternative view of Charles' approach to the touch, which stresses his overwhelming desire to reform the ritual in ways commensurate with his wider aim of creating a decorous and orderly court, see S. Brogan, 'The Royal Touch in Early Modern England: Its Changing Rationale and Practice', PhD thesis (London, 2011), 87–97.

²¹ For Boisgandre, see *CSPD*, 1631–1633, 252, 347–8. He was married to the daughter of the prominent English Catholic Sir Thomas Wolseley (d.1630). For Leverett, see *CSPD*, 1636–1637, 328; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 201, 204; RCPL, Annals, iii, 459–66. In 1639, the College was investigating the activities of another putative 'stroker' or miracle healer, Christopher Barton. His case was forwarded to the Privy Council for advice and adjudication: *ibid.*, iii, 494–6; TNA, PC 2/51, fo. 90v. The cases of Leverett and Barton are discussed within the wider context of the medical politics of the London College of Physicians in M. Pelling, *Medical Conflicts in Early Modern London: Patronage, Physicians, and Irregular Practitioners 1550–1640* (Oxford, 2003), 160n, 270, 276n, 306.

contrast, witch trials and the discovery of diabolical enclaves and demonic conspiracies were less likely to receive the imprimatur of those charged with the oversight of a body politic which its divinely ordained head perceived as inherently harmonious and well governed. Witches were agents of disorder. They might exist elsewhere—indeed the disordered affairs of neighbouring states and their ‘witch problems’ frequently elicited the interest of the court and courtiers—but their presence in Charles’ England was always likely to be construed as a form of divine rebuke to the powers that be.²² Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the active promotion of cases of witchcraft often fell to those most disaffected with the status quo in Church and state, and, as a consequence, that they were most likely to originate in communities riven by religious and political conflict.

The 1630s, despite the paucity of witchcraft trials, provides a number of interesting instances of such developments. In Kent, for example, only three assize trials were recorded in the surviving home circuit records for the period of Charles’ Personal Rule. All took place in towns and villages noted for precocious religiosity, and in two instances would appear to have been instigated by men who later played a major role in fomenting opposition to the established Church and the royal cause. In the first case, that at Ash near Sandwich in 1631, one of the principal witnesses against the accused witch was a local gentleman named Henry Harflete (1580–1656) of Hills Court, who later claimed to have ‘laboured day and night in the Parliament’s service’.²³ Five years later, the small village of Horton Kirby near Dartford was the site of another witch trial in which the radical puritan minister of the parish Francis Cornwell and his wife Anne appeared as witnesses. Cornwell later moved to the parish of Marden in Kent where he was frequently in trouble with the ecclesiastical authorities for nonconformity. He eventually converted to the Baptists in 1644 after which time he served as one of the founding fathers of that sect in the

²² In contrast to Charles I’s studied indifference to the matter of witchcraft, his beleaguered and estranged sister Elizabeth of Bohemia (1596–1662), now living in exile in the United Provinces, was intrigued by the case of the Pendle witches. In June 1634, she had an audience with the future parliamentarian commander Sir William Brereton (1604–1661), where she sought to elicit the latest news of the trials in England. At the same time, she was at pains to vindicate belief in witchcraft, referring to the recent discovery and execution of a whole village of witches in Westphalia: E. Hawkins (ed.), *Travels in Holland, The United Provinces, England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1634–1635*, by Sir William Brereton, *Bart* (Manchester, Chetham Soc., 1, 1844), 33–4.

²³ J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records. Kent Indictments, Charles I* (London, 1995), 151; H. Harflete, *Vox Coelorum. Predictions Defended* (London, 1646?), A2v. Trained as a lawyer, Harflete turned to literary and natural philosophical pursuits and was the author of numerous works, including *Vox Coelorum*, in which he defended astrology from the charge of conjuration and witchcraft. His puritanical inclinations are evident in his last work, *A Banquet of Essayes* (London, 1653), particularly in his comments on stage plays and writing, though he was also dismissive of those schismatics who preferred meeting in private chambers to churches. For a brief account of his life and career, see *ODNB*, sub Harflete, Henry. Conventicles were recorded at Ash in 1626, and parishioners from the village were attending similar gatherings in nearby Sandwich in 1640: R. J. Acheson, ‘The Development of Religious Separatism in the Diocese of Canterbury 1590–1660’, PhD thesis (Kent, Canterbury, 1983), 13; KHLIC, Sa/AC7, fo. 382. By the mid-1640s, there were gatherings of Baptists here, at which Francis Cornwell was present, while Thomas Edwards recorded in 1646 that one living at Ash near Sandwich claimed to be Christ: Cockburn, *Kent Indictments, Charles I*, 487; T. Edwards, *Gangraena* (London, 1646), iii, 78.

county.²⁴ Squeezed between these two cases was a third that took place at Sevenoaks, where in 1635 the accused witch, like that at Horton, was found not guilty at the assizes. Sevenoaks, too, was an early centre of Baptist activity in the 1640s, as well as the home of the eccentric prophet and mechanic preacher James Hunt, who was prosecuted by both the Anglican and puritan authorities in the 1640s for his unorthodox views and anti-social behaviour.²⁵ This pattern, moreover, was repeated in the eastern counties of England, where isolated accusations of witchcraft often took place in those same communities that would later provide many more victims during the period of the Hopkins trials. There were witchcraft trials, for example, in the troubled and deeply divided boroughs of Ipswich (1639, 1640)²⁶ and Great Yarmouth (1637),²⁷ as well as a number of villages in the Tendring hundred of Essex (Great Holland, 1638; Lawford, 1641).²⁸ Witches were also tried (and acquitted) from three other Essex towns and villages, all of which were notable sites of deep-seated religious division with sizeable puritan communities. Perhaps the most spectacular example of this correlation between witch-hunting and religious division can be found in the borough port of Harwich, situated on the Tendring peninsula on the east coast of Essex. The town's religious troubles dated back to around 1615 but they reached their peak in the early 1630s, when the town's conformable minister William Innes succeeded in humbling the puritan oligarchy that governed the borough as well as forcing local 'friends' of the town, including its recorder and former MP, Sir Harbottle Grimston, and Sir Thomas Bowes, to make a grovelling apology to the Privy Council. By 1636, a local church official wrote to the bishop of London describing Harwich as 'almost ruined with contention'.²⁹ Innes may have

²⁴ Cockburn, *Kent Indictments, Charles I*, 267, 420, 435, 438, 487; T. Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, 4 vols (London, 1738–40), i, 344–5; iii, 7–9. To what extent Cornwell's interest in witchcraft may have informed the beliefs of fellow co-religionists in the 1650s, when, as we shall see, the Baptists were very prominent in promoting witchcraft trials in Kent, is open to conjecture; see below, 144–9. Horton Kirby was another Kentish village, like Ash, with a tradition of radical separatism. In 1613, Edward Browne, gent, of Horton Kirby, was indicted at the Essex assizes for attending a Brownist conventicle at Coggeshall, a village which a few years earlier had been the site of several witchcraft scares (see above, 37–8): J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records. Essex Indictments, James I* (London, 1982), 118, 127. Given the radical leanings of Francis Cornwell, it is possible that Rachel Browne, a fellow witness in the 1636 trial, was related to the separatist Edward Browne: Cockburn, *Kent Indictments, Charles I*, 267.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 252, 255. For Hunt's various tribulations, see his numerous publications and *CSPD*, 1640, 415; Cockburn, *Kent Indictments, Charles I*, 449, 516. The leader of the Baptists at Sevenoaks was William Jeffery, who was responsible, among other things, for establishing Baptist congregations at Orpington, Speldhurst, and Pembury, as well as receiving Francis Cornwell (above) into the Baptist fold: Crosby, *History*, iii, 97–9; Cockburn, *Kent Indictments, Charles I*, 484, 518.

²⁶ ESKRO, C8/4/7, 329, 333, 335. One of the accused, Katherine Dameron, who was acquitted by proclamation in 1640, was later hanged for witchcraft in 1652: *ibid.*, 427; ESKRO, C8/4/8, 10.

²⁷ DWL, Harmer MS 76.3 [J. Davey, 'The Church at Great Yarmouth under the Commonwealth'], 277. Miles Corbet, the recorder of Yarmouth, who was responsible for sending the accused witch Violet Smith to Norwich, was to play a vital role in the religious and political life of town and nation in the aftermath of the civil wars, as well as assuming responsibility for the prosecution of the Hopkins suspects in 1645.

²⁸ Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, 219, 220–1. Both suspects later perished in the Hopkins trials.

²⁹ The factional divisions and political conflict that characterized life in pre-civil war Harwich are worthy of a case study in their own right. The best summary of the events described here can be found in O. U. Kalu, 'The Jacobean Church and Essex Puritans: A Regional Study of the Enforcement of

won a temporary respite, but he could do nothing to halt the spread of religious sectarianism in the town.³⁰ In the meantime, two Harwich women were hauled before the assizes in 1634 and 1638 accused of witchcraft, while a beggar was accused there in 1633 of keeping imps and using them to sink shipping.³¹ The most notable feature of events at Harwich was the role played by the disgraced local dignitaries in first, defending the puritan oligarchy that governed the town in the 1630s, and later promoting the mass trials of 1645 that began in the villages adjacent to Harwich. Grimston and Bowes, as we shall see, were both prominent spokesmen for the puritan and parliamentary cause in this part of Essex in the early 1640s. In all likelihood, their support for Hopkins and witch-hunting stemmed from a deep-seated desire to initiate a fundamental reform of local society along mainstream puritan lines. Similar divisions and conflicts to those at Harwich characterized the religious life of the populous clothing town of Braintree, which was the site of a witchcraft trial in 1636,³² while the incidence of witchcraft at Hatfield Broad Oak in 1642, on the eve of the civil war, may well have been related to the fact that the parish, under the patronage of the godly Barrington family, was a long-established centre of puritan devotion as well as a refuge for embattled puritan ministers in the 1630s.³³

Clearly, in many of these cases, the collaboration of ‘credulous’ magistrates was crucial in order to initiate proceedings against alleged witches. Puritanical zeal may also have played its part. This much is apparent from various witchcraft trials that took place in Lancashire and Berkshire in the 1630s. In Lancashire, for example, concern with witchcraft was not extinguished by the famous trials at Pendle in

Church Discipline and on the Survival of Puritan Non-Conformity, 1603–1628’, PhD thesis (Toronto, 1973), 110, 282, 438–48. For official reaction to the events of the 1630s, see *CSPD*, 1628–1629, 470; *CSPD*, 1629–1631, 474, 494, 502, 505; *CSPD*, 1631–1633, 125, 145, 256, 274–5, 276; *CSPD*, 1636–1637, 261.

³⁰ Innes was replaced as vicar in 1639 by Charles Bainbrigg, but he proved no more popular than his predecessor. In 1643, a petition signed by fifty-three parishioners was forwarded to the House of Commons requesting his removal on the grounds of immorality and disaffection to Parliament. Bainbrigg’s supporters counter-petitioned, claiming that the rival faction wished to impose Thomas Wood, a radical Irish separatist and ‘mere mechanic’, on the parish. Bainbrigg wisely quit, leaving Wood as sole lecturer in the town: *Wal. Rev.*, 145; Bodl., Tanner MS 62, fos 343, 346.

³¹ Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, 217, 218–19; Harwich Borough Archives, HB 65/7.

³² Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, 218. The trial of the Braintree witch in 1636 coincided with a campaign of disobedience in the parish regarding the Laudian edict to erect altar rails; Bodl., Tanner MS 68, fo. 198. The incumbent, Samuel Collins (1580–1657), was placed in an invidious position, as he desperately attempted to appease the church authorities while at the same time retaining his many links with puritan friends and colleagues in Essex. A few years earlier he provided a vivid picture of the problems he faced in a letter to the bishop’s chancellor, in which he lambasted neighbouring ministers for encouraging conventicles and leaving ‘schismatical books’ among his people, and defended his ‘softly, softly’ approach to recalcitrant parishioners by claiming that any other course of action would have ‘broken the town to pieces’: *CSPD*, 1631–1633, 255 [Collins to Dr Duck, 18 January 1632]. The recently erected altar rails were later burned down by pressed soldiers in the summer of 1640: *CSPD*, 1640, 522.

³³ The Barringtons’ home at Hatfield Broad Oak was the site of frequent puritan fasts at which, Tom Webster has speculated, the concerns of the puritan clergy of Essex relating to the direction of the Caroline Church were most likely vented and discussed: T. Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement*, c. 1620–1643 (Cambridge, 1997), 9–12 and *passim*.

1612. The area around Pendle continued to produce accusations that led ultimately, in 1634, to another major episode of witch-hunting in the area.³⁴ Interestingly, that particular scare was preceded the previous year by another witchcraft trial, which, unusually for the period, led to guilty verdicts and the execution of three men and one woman at the Lancaster assizes.³⁵ In both instances, puritans were involved, either as victims or magistrates, a factor that may have inclined the authorities in London to look mercifully on those accused and subsequently examined in the capital in 1634. In 1633, the principal victim was Ralph Ashton or Assheton (c.1605–1680) of Middleton Hall, who later served as MP in the Long Parliament, fought for the parliamentary cause in the civil war, and was elected a member of the Lancashire presbytery.³⁶ A year later, Richard Shuttleworth (1587–1669) of Gawthorpe Hall and John Starkie (1584–1665) of Simonstone, justices of the peace with impeccable puritan credentials, were fully convinced on the basis of extensive examination of witnesses and suspects that they had uncovered a new nest of conspiratorial witches within the vicinity of Pendle Hill.³⁷ Shuttleworth, like Ralph Ashton, later served as an MP in the Long Parliament (for Preston), as well as sitting as a member throughout much of the 1650s. His colleague John Starkie was none other than the young boy who had been exorcized by John Darrell in 1599, and whose case, alongside those of Darrell's other patients, had figured prominently in the ensuing debate between Anglicans and puritans. In later years, Starkie became a prominent supporter of the parliamentary cause in Lancashire, his eldest son dying as a captain in the parliamentary army in 1643.³⁸ Undeterred by the outcome of the second Pendle trials, the puritan magistracy of Lancashire continued to promote witch-hunting. Four years later, in 1638, Peter Winn, working alongside his puritan colleague William Ashurst, wrote to

³⁴ In 1625, a witch was reported to have been murdered in Whalley, near Pendle, in a year that was otherwise marked by a renewed fear of resurgent Catholicism in the neighbourhood: *CSPD, 1625–1626*, 162–3, 167. Two years later, at Simonstone, near Whalley, the home of the magistrate John Starkie, a local woman was accused of using sorcery and witchcraft: *HMC, Fourteenth Report, Appendix, Part IV. Manuscripts of Lord Kenyon* (London, 1894), 36. These examples should be seen within the context of two local studies of the original Pendle trials of 1612 which have focused attention on religious tensions between Catholics and puritans in the large parish of Whalley, as well as the long-standing design of local puritans, including the examining magistrate Roger Nowell (1582–1623), to implement a godly war on sin in the neighbourhood. The 1612 trials can thus be seen as a natural product of such concerns and conflicts: see J. Lumby, '“Those to whom evil is done”: Family Dynamics in the Pendle Witch Trials', and M. Mullett, 'The Reformation in the Parish of Whalley', in R. Poole (ed.), *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories* (Manchester, 2002), 42–57, 88–104.

³⁵ Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 408–9.

³⁶ Assheton was elected MP for the borough of Clitheroe in 1625, 1626, 1640, 1660, 1661, and 1679: B. D. Henning (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1660–1690*, 3 vols (London, 1983), i, 561–2. The executed witches were accused of invoking evil spirits to hurt Assheton as well as held responsible for the death of his son and heir, Richard.

³⁷ Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 244, 248.

³⁸ For religious and political tensions surrounding the exorcism episode of 1599, in which John Dee figured prominently, see S. Bowd, 'John Dee and the Seven in Lancashire: Possession, Exorcism, and Apocalypse in Elizabethan England', *Northern History*, 47 (2010), 233–46. The case is also discussed in T. Webster, '(Re)possession or Dispossession: John Darrell and Diabolical Discourse', in J. Newton and J. Bath (eds), *Witchcraft and the Act of 1604* (Leiden, 2008), 91–111.

George Rigby (1602–1644), clerk of the peace for the county, in the hope that he might expedite proceedings against Anne Spencer, suspected of the murder by witchcraft of Richard Cross, ‘a longe time servaunt’ of the family of the earl of Derby. While nothing is known of Winn, both Ashurst and Rigby were prominent supporters of the godly cause in Lancashire. Ashurst was a staunch puritan and sabbatarian, who rejected the legality of the Book of Sports in 1633 and later sat as MP for Newton in the Long Parliament. The lawyer Rigby was a ‘sound Calvinist’ who, like his brother Alexander, supported Parliament in the civil war and died at the siege of Lathom House.³⁹

The figure of the godly magistrate also featured prominently in a case of witchcraft in the borough of Reading in Berkshire in 1634.⁴⁰ The town was prey throughout this period to political faction and religious dissent, exacerbated no doubt in the year of the witchcraft revelations by the visit of Archbishop William Laud, patron and benefactor of his native town, who personally oversaw the implementation of the Arminian programme of ‘the beauty of holiness’ in the town’s main church.⁴¹ One month before Laud’s visit, the magistrates, in the shape of the mayor Robert Malthus (d.1645 or 1646), the town steward Sir Edward Clarke (d.1639), and Reading’s MP John Saunders (c.1590–1638), heard complaints against Edith and William Walls who were accused of bewitching one Edward Bonavent. A local physician, Andrew Bird (d.1636), was unable to diagnose the cause of the latter’s fits, and the three justices ordered that both suspects should be strip-searched for evidence of witch’s marks. A jury of matrons found a suspicious growth, like a teat, under Edith’s armpit, concluding that she was ‘not as other women’. Meanwhile, her husband’s search, conducted by six men including three surgeons, found no evidence of unusual growths except for a blue spot ‘whiche they did pricke and bledd’. Edith was subsequently committed to prison, while her husband was referred to the assizes, the records for which no longer survive. Two of the three examining magistrates were almost certainly sympathetic, if not fully supportive, of the puritan cause. Malthus, a draper by trade, was the father and grandfather of two puritan ministers who were subsequently ejected from their livings at the Restoration.⁴² The more senior magistrate, Sir Edward Clarke, who acted in the capacity of town recorder, was a deeply pious man, who helped to establish a lecture at Reading in 1628 at the same time as he

³⁹ HMC. *Kenyon Manuscripts*, 55. For Ashurst, see R. Halley, *Lancashire: Its Puritanism and Nonconformity*, 2 vols (Manchester, 1869), i, 263. For the Righys, see ODNB, sub Rigby, Alexander, and Rigby, George. James Stanley, Lord Strange (1607–1651), the son of the reclusive earl of Derby, was running the household at Lathom House at the time of these events. Despite his subsequent support for Charles I in the civil war, he was an outspoken critic of the bishops and Charles I’s religious policies in the 1630s: ODNB, sub Stanley, James, seventh earl of Derby.

⁴⁰ J. M. Guilding (ed.), *Reading Records: Diary of the Corporation*, 4 vols (London, 1894–6), iii, 231–3. There were earlier witch trials in Reading in 1626 and 1631. On the latter occasion, the parish registers of St Mary’s record the burial of three women, all ‘apprehended for a wich’: *ibid.*, ii, 311–12; G. P. Crawford (ed.), *The Registers of the Parish of St Mary, Reading, Berkshire, 1538–1812*, 2 vols (Reading, 1891–2), ii, 112 [burials, 10 and 13 January 1631].

⁴¹ For the religious and political condition of Reading in the 1630s, see M. Brod, *The Case of Reading: Urban Governance in Troubled Times, 1640–1690* (Peterborough, 2006), 16–20.

⁴² *Cal. Rev.*, 335–6. Robert Malthus served as mayor of Reading in 1622 and 1633.

attempted to have the Petition of Religion inscribed into the town's records. His support for the godly cause was duly acknowledged in the dedications of two works to him by the puritan preacher Thomas Taylor (1576–1632).⁴³ Clarke, moreover, was no stranger to witchcraft investigations. In 1605, he had been asked by the judges who oversaw the trial of the two witches accused of bewitching Anne Gunter to interview the latter in order to ascertain the likelihood of dissimulation. Clarke's judgement is not recorded, though the fact that he subsequently moved in the same puritanical circles as Anne's kinsman, Nicholas Gunter (d.1635), a leading figure in the corporation of Reading who, like Clarke, was charged with interrogating one of the suspected witches in 1605, may suggest sympathy for the plight of Anne Gunter.⁴⁴

If the mindset of beleaguered puritans was a factor in all these cases, a by-product of the official clampdown on religious dissent, then as we have seen in the previous chapter, there were numerous precedents for such a correlation. But just as there is little evidence to suggest that agents of the state acted against witches in a premeditated fashion in order to bolster the authority and legitimacy of those in power, it would be equally fallacious to reduce puritanical witch-hunting to an act of political expediency in which the fears of a suppressed minority were exploited by

⁴³ W. R. Prest, *The Rise of the Barristers: A Social History of the English Bar 1590–1640* (Oxford, 1986), 231, 350; Guilding (ed.), *Reading Records*, ii, 402; T. Taylor, *The Parable of the Sower and of the Seed* (London, 1621), A2r; T. Taylor, *The Principles of Christian Practice* (London, 1635), A2r [posthumous dedication by Taylor's puritan colleague, William Jemmat]. The former collection, which contains an attack on the Arminian infiltration of the Church, is also dedicated to Nicholas Gunter (below) and Clarke's fellow magistrate, John Saunders. For the latter's parliamentary career, see A. Thrush and J. P. Ferris (eds), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1604–1629*, 6 vols (Cambridge, 2010), 210–12. Saunders presented his brother, Dr Anthony Saunders, the son-in-law of the fiery puritan critic of the crown, Thomas Wentworth (c.1568–1627), to the rectory of Pangbourne, near Reading. For Taylor, see *ODNB*.

⁴⁴ J. Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A Horrible and True Story of Football, Witchcraft, Murder, and the King of England* (London, 1999), 85, 87, 128–9. Nicholas Gunter served five times as mayor of Reading (1607, 1618, 1626–28). Further links between the Gunters and local godly networks are also suggested by the fact that in 1622, Thomas Taylor (above) preached a funeral sermon in memory of Mary, the wife of one H. Gunter: T. Taylor, *The Pilgrims Profession. Or a Sermon Preached at the Funerall of Mrs Mary Gunter . . . To which is added, A Short Relation of the Life and Death of the said Gentle-woman* (London, 1622), 121–92. Was this Harvey Gunter, the brother of the bewitched girl, Anne? If so, his dead wife is described as a former Catholic turned zealous Protestant, who converted under the guidance of Lettice, countess of Leicester (1543–1634), the widow of the late earl. She was described by Taylor as a great reader of the Bible who regularly engaged in fasting and prayer. The puritan Taylor was well connected to the household of the countess. He dedicated another work (*Christ's Combate and Conquest*, Cambridge, 1618) to the countess' brother, Sir Francis Knollys (c.1550–1648), who was to play a minor role in the Anne Gunter affair: Sharpe, *Bewitching of Anne Gunter*, 114. Knollys, who had served under the earl of Leicester in the Low Countries, subsequently pursued a long political career, sitting as MP for Reading in 1572–89, and for Berkshire in 1597. In November 1640, at the age of 90, he was elected to the Long Parliament as MP for Reading and became a committed roundhead: P. W. Hasler (ed.), *The Houses of Parliament: The House of Commons 1558–1603*, 3 vols (London, 1981), ii, 479–81. If H. Gunter was Harvey, then he must have remarried. In 1625, the clergyman Thomas Browne (d.1625), rector of Bladon in Oxfordshire, named his uncle Harvey Gunter as overseer of his will and left his wife, Mary, ten shillings. Browne had married Susanna, the daughter of Thomas Holland, and left various bequests to his in-laws as well as his grandfather Brian Gunter and brother-in-law John Whetcombe (for whom, see above, 48–52): TNA, PROB 11/145, fos 277v–278r [23 February 1624/5; proved 9 March 1624/5]; Sharpe, *Bewitching of Anne Gunter*, 202–3.

its leaders as a tactical ploy in a wider campaign of reformist agitation.⁴⁵ Puritans did not hunt witches in order to heap shame on their religious opponents. Rather, they were attracted to the idea that witches were active in their communities because they believed that all the hallmarks of resurgent diabolism—disorder, ungodliness, and conflict—were present too. Under such circumstances, it was natural for those who perceived their communities as besieged by the forces of evil to be more sensitive and thus receptive to claims of witchcraft, just as it made more sense for those like Charles I and his supporters, who rejected the idea of the Church and state as fundamentally disordered, to deprecate such claims. From the earliest days of the Elizabethan settlement, fear of witches and witchcraft was always most commonly associated with those who agitated for further reform in religion and society, and thus took on the guise of an ‘oppositional’ cause. However, there was nothing intrinsic to puritanism per se that made it more amenable to witch-hunting than any other manifestation of Protestantism, or indeed Roman Catholicism, which provided ecclesiological support for witchfinders in other parts of Europe.

This much is evident from counter-examples, where it can be shown that puritanism, under specific circumstances, acted to inhibit the pursuit of witches. A particularly fine instance is provided by evidence from that godly citadel, Dorchester in Dorset, where the puritan minister John White (1575–1648) oversaw the creation, in microcosm, of a thoroughly reformed and godly commonwealth in the first half of the seventeenth century. White was aided in his work by the unstinting support of a lay puritan magistracy in the town who used their authority to impose a strict moral code on the town’s inhabitants, aimed at rooting out sin in all its forms. The ‘offenders’ book’, compiled between 1629 and 1637, records in minute detail how White and his allies went about this work, punishing on a regular basis those who dared to flout the godly conventions laid down by the town’s governing elite. No witches, however, were prosecuted in this period. Witchcraft was mentioned on four occasions (once in 1631 and three times in 1634), but each time it was readily dismissed by Dorchester’s godly magistrates who preferred instead to admonish those who brought such claims. It is not difficult to see why they may have acted in this fashion. On all four occasions, the claims of witchcraft arose from sections of Dorchester society that are best

⁴⁵ The idea that witchcraft and witch-hunting coincided with, and was related to, the emergence of the early modern nation state was first suggested by Christine Larnier in her study of Scottish witchcraft: C. Larnier, *Enemies of God: The Witch Hunt in Scotland* (London, 1981). For critical engagement with this view, see especially G. R. Quaife, *Godly Zeal and Furious Rage: The Witch in Early Modern Europe* (London and Sydney, 1987), 113–41, and B. Levack, ‘State-building and Witch Hunting in Early Modern Europe’, in J. Barry, M. Hester, and G. Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge, 1996), 96–115. Despite criticisms of the crude reductionism of Larnier’s approach by Quaife among others, variations on this theme continue to inform specific case studies such as that of early seventeenth-century Rye, where witchcraft accusations are dismissed as mere strategies in political controversies or envisaged as ‘an appropriate tactic for suppressing political opposition’: A. Gregory, ‘Witchcraft, Politics and “Good Neighbourhood” in Early Seventeenth-Century Rye’, *Past and Present*, 133 (1991), 51, 58. Gregory does, however, acknowledge the limits of her own functionalist approach: *ibid.*, 55.

described as representative of that underclass and festive culture that was diametrically opposed to puritanism. George Brine, for example, who was committed in 1631 for calling a neighbouring woman a 'witch and jade' and threatening to 'wash her' (presumably by ducking), was profoundly hostile to the town's ruling elite, arguing on one occasion that the sole purpose of fining offenders like himself was to put money in the purses of the puritan faction that ran the town.⁴⁶ Much the same holds true for the other cases of witchcraft presented before Dorchester's courts. In January 1634, Richard Shory was accused of calling John Merefield, a shoemaker, of being a witch, which he hoped to prove in time-honoured fashion by burning wood from the suspect's house in the expectation he would appear and so confirm his guilt. Just over a week later, Margery Goodfellow was threatened with expulsion from the town's almshouse if she continued to disturb the peace of the place by quarrelling with other inmates and calling them names such as witch.⁴⁷ The final case, involving Joan, the wife of Elias Fry, who accused Margery Adyn of bewitching her daughter with a cake, is particularly revealing in this respect. Fry, like Shory, attempted to burn thatch from Adyn's house, an experiment that she performed not in her own home, but in that of a local butcher, Roger Pouncey.⁴⁸ Fry's husband Elias, a glazer by trade, and Pouncey were fully paid up members of Dorchester's awkward squad. Elias and his family were repeatedly fined and admonished for a range of offences against the moral coda of the town, including drinking, swearing, and absence from church. Fry also accused one of the town's constables in 1632 of acting solely in the interests of the wealthy, governing elite after he was convented to the spiritual court at Blandford for sleeping in church. Roger Pouncey, however, was in a league of his own, colourfully described by the town's historian, David Underdown, as 'a sort of godfather to the unruly and unregenerate of Dorchester'.⁴⁹ Under the circumstances, it is perhaps hardly surprising that the town's puritan magistrates poured cold water on Joan Fry's accusation of witchcraft, preferring instead to admonish both accuser and accused to desist from further abusive and disorderly behaviour.

The ruling elite of puritan Dorchester shared much in common with Charles I. Both were convinced of the righteous and divinely ordained nature of their authority, while at the same time both were loathe to acknowledge witchcraft as a genuine threat to the peace of their respective polities. There is no suggestion here that either rejected the reality of witchcraft. William Whiteway (1599–1635), one of the leading figures in the government of Dorchester in this period, recorded

⁴⁶ DHC, DC/DOB 8/1, fo. 100r; D. Underdown, *Fire from Heaven: The Life of an English Town in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1992), 77, 150.

⁴⁷ DHC, DC/DOB 8/1, fos 198v, 199v. Shory was a labourer who was prosecuted in May 1635 for swearing oaths. Merefield's disorderly household was investigated later that year when it was alleged that two of his children were sleeping together and engaging in sexual intercourse: *ibid.*, fos 219v, 239r, 274r.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, fo. 228v.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, fos 105r, 123v, 140r, 204v, 243r, 286r, 313v, 345r, 347v; Underdown, *Fire from Heaven*, 149, 164–6. On another occasion, one of Pouncey's sons was reported to have said that he would prefer to 'set his arse on fire' rather than attend on the minister John White before taking communion: DHC, DC/DOB 8/1, fo. 307r.

the trial and execution of ‘a great many notorious witches’ from Lancashire in 1634, as well as the murder of the ‘witch’ Dr Lambe six years earlier.⁵⁰ The puritan magistrate Whiteway was seemingly content to accept that other parts of the kingdom, particularly the unregenerate north, might produce witches, but not godly Dorchester. Elsewhere, however, as we have seen, where puritans vied for power and communities were torn apart by religious conflict, the threat of witchcraft seemed more real and increasingly led those affected to seek legal redress. Essentially, what I believe we are witnessing here in the 1630s is the politicization of ideas and practices associated with witchcraft within the context of a society that was experiencing growing internal discord and conflict. Regardless of whether or not these divisions were inexorably destined to culminate in civil war, they were responsible for raising the temperature of religious and political debate throughout Britain at a time when external factors, especially developments in the Thirty Years War, encouraged providential and millennial speculation. Witchcraft, of course, was fundamentally a product of a providentialist world-view, so it comes as little surprise to discover that the concept of providence itself was becoming increasingly susceptible to this wider process of politicization in the 1620s and 1630s, when, in the words of Alex Walsham, it ‘became a pawn in the internecine conflicts within the Caroline church between ministers of an Arminian and Laudian persuasion and those Calvinists they were in the process of relabelling “puritan” troublemakers’.⁵¹ Others have concurred, and while there is still much to be done in order to explore fully the origins and nature of this process, it is worth noting the observation of John Walter that the ‘logical action prescribed by this providentialist politics’ was a form of moral cleansing aimed at ridding ‘the community of the polluting presence of those persons and practices which offended God’.⁵² This, as we shall see, was precisely the kind of thinking that informed and motivated the work of men such as the iconoclast William Dowsing and the witch hunter Matthew Hopkins in East Anglia in the 1640s. Their actions grew naturally from the fertile soil of a revived providentialism in the 1630s which, initially puritanical in origin, was increasingly destined to appeal to men and women across the religious and political spectrum.

There can be little doubt, however, that for much of the period of the Personal Rule, providentialism, like witchcraft, was monopolized by those most critical of Charles’ regime. Sermons and news reports commonly linked freak weather, war, and plague to the policies pursued by Charles and his ministers. Outbreaks of the bubonic plague were particularly seized upon by critics of royal government as a sign of divine displeasure and punishment for the recent Laudian innovations.⁵³

⁵⁰ D. Underdown (ed.), *William Whiteway of Dorchester His Diary 1618 to 1635* (Dorchester, Dorset Rec. Soc., 12, 1991), 97, 128, 145. For Whiteway, a close ally of John White, see *ODNB*.

⁵¹ A. Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), 163–6, 218–24, 250–80, 333 [quote at 110].

⁵² J. Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: The Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge, 1999), 326, 328. For an important contribution to this subject, which stresses the bi-partisan nature of providential thinking in the 1640s and 1650s, see G. C. Browell, ‘The Politics of Providence in England, 1640–1660’, Ph.D. thesis (Canterbury, Kent, 2000).

⁵³ See, for example, the sermon of the puritan firebrand Edward Sparrowhawk, preached at Coggeshall, as reported by Laud’s commissary, Robert Aylett, in March 1637. Sparrowhawk clearly

Disease, of course, was a natural adjunct of a sinful body politic, the spiritual health of the nation reflected in the physical wellbeing (or lack thereof) of its people. We should not be surprised, therefore, that for those disaffected with the drift of government in Caroline England such ideas provided a suitable explanation for the plight of the godly as well as a justification for their criticism of royal policy that went beyond mere propaganda. If the notion of the body politic was a reality for all early modern Englishmen and women, including those of a puritan bent, then it was logical for some to link the onset of evils like the plague with the corrupt state of contemporary politics. At the same time, as religious and political controversy escalated, some critics became increasingly willing to account for the misfortunes of private individuals such as judges and courtiers by recourse to the actions of an angry, providential deity. The letters of the beleaguered Suffolk puritan William Greenhill (1591–1671) to his patron Lady Jane Bacon are suffused with this kind of ‘particular’ providentialism, with frequent references to apparitions, visions, presages, murders, and judicial revenge.⁵⁴ Similar sentiments seem to have informed the interests of a colleague from another Suffolk parish, John Rous (1584–1644), who in 1631 recorded the providential afflictions, including sudden death, suffered by two assize judges on the Norfolk circuit.⁵⁵ As the country descended into chaos in the late 1630s and early 1640s, so accounts of providential occurrences mushroomed. In February 1639, for example, a correspondent from Yorkshire referred to the sighting of a muster of fairies, satyrs, and devils at Knaresborough, training with pikes and muskets. A few weeks earlier, another writer had reported that a recent storm had ‘done a world of mischief all over

linked the onset of plague with the religious policies pursued by the King and his advisers, claiming that God frequently withheld the cure for this and other infirmities, as well as providing the ideal conditions for the spread of such diseases, if men were ill deserving; TNA, SP 16/350/54 I [Aylett to Laud, 7 March 1637]. Similar thinking at this time seems to have informed the belief of Northamptonshire’s puritans who ascribed the plague to the people’s willingness to accept the Laudian directive on altar rails: John Fielding, ‘Opposition to the Personal Rule of Charles I: The Diary of Robert Woodford, 1637–1641’, *Historical Journal*, 31 (1988), 783–4. The flip side of this kind of thinking is evident in the case of puritan Northampton in the early years of the seventeenth century, where it was suggested that a campaign of moral reform spearheaded by the godly mayor of the corporation was responsible for the town’s avoidance of the plague: Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, 140.

⁵⁴ For a selection, see K. W. Shipp, ‘Lay Patronage of East Anglian Puritan Clerics in Pre-Revolutionary England’, PhD thesis (New Haven, 1971), Appendix VII. The original correspondence can be found in ERO, DBy/C24. Greenhill, minister at Oakley, Suffolk, from 1631 to 1636, was finally ousted by Bishop Matthew Wren and was forced to emigrate to Holland, where he engaged in smuggling illegal publications, including Prynne’s inflammatory *News from Ipswich*, into England: Shipp, ‘Lay Patronage’, 154–60. For a hugely unflattering portrait of Greenhill, which illustrates the contempt in which he was held by the Laudian authorities, see the account of Wren’s commissary, Dr Corbett, penned in March 1637: Bodl., Tanner MS 68, fos 6r–v.

⁵⁵ Green (ed.), *Diary of John Rous*, 62, 63. The judges themselves would appear to have been peculiarly sensitive to the assize sermons preached by local puritan ministers in these years in which the concept of a corrupt and sick body politic figured prominently; see *ibid.*, 50, 62. One of the sermons mentioned by Rous, given by Thomas Scott at Bury St Edmunds in 1631, was subsequently published despite its coded critique of Charles’ regime. Interestingly, in commenting upon witnesses who perjured their consciences, Scott specifically raised the relevance of such actions in cases involving witches—an indication perhaps of the growing awareness among contemporaries of the partiality and untrustworthiness of witnesses in such capital crimes: T. Scott, *God and the King, in a Sermon Preached at the Assises* [Bury St Edmunds, 13 June 1631] (Cambridge, 1633), 19–20.

England' and that 'the people are generally so molested with predictions, and rumours of supposed visions, as if they were all struck with a panic fear'. Later the same year, a book 'containing a prophecy in rhyme' was circulating in puritan Ipswich, while on Whit Sunday 1640, 'strange effects of thunder and lightning' were reported in Anthony in Cornwall as the minister celebrated communion.⁵⁶ Between 1640 and 1642, reports of such incidents continued to proliferate, facilitated no doubt by the collapse of censorship and rapid spread of printed newsletters and pamphlets. In 1641, for example, the appearance of a spirit in the form of a bird at Zeal Monachorum in Devon six years earlier found its way into print, possibly intended as an attempt to promote political and religious reconciliation.⁵⁷ A year later, the puritan magistrate Sir Harbottle Grimston (1603–1685), who would play such a prominent role in hunting down witches in Essex in 1645, was receiving accounts of premonitory visions and dreams from a Suffolk minister that were clearly intended to be interpreted as a harbinger of further political conflict in the body politic.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, in the spring of 1642 his political adversary Thomas Knyvett warned in a letter to a friend in Norfolk that a 'public phlebotomy' was indeed imminent 'if God in mercy doth not in time cast out these evil spirits amongst us'.⁵⁹

The political crisis engendered in England by conflict with the Scots over the imposition of the Anglican Prayer Book unleashed a torrent of public debate and discourse that was not only providentialist in character, but also tinged throughout with recourse to the language of diabolism and witchcraft. Critically, both sides engaged in such rhetoric and in the process helped to create a growing sense that the British Isles in the early 1640s was becoming a battleground between the cosmic

⁵⁶ Bodl., Tanner MS 67, fo. 54 [Ashton to Tutton, 16 February 1638/9]; *CSPD*, 1638–1639, 361 [Thomas Smith to Sir John Pennington, 24 January 1639]; *CSPD*, 1639, 68 [Secretary Windebank to the bailiffs of Ipswich, 21 April 1639]; *CSPD*, 1640, 213 [report of Richard Carew, 24 May 1640]. The storm damage at Anthony, along with that at Withycombe in Somerset two years earlier, was recycled for popular consumption in a pamphlet of 1642 that sought to depict such acts as judgements on the new order in the Laudian Church. In another episode reported in the same publication, the anonymous author recounted how a broken beam destroyed the altar ('as they call it') of a church in Suffolk. Communicants in the congregation, kneeling before the altar, were then struck on the legs and feet by the debris, one being catapulted into the air before being miraculously reseated on the form 'before which he kneeled'. For puritan opponents of the Church, it was impossible to see this as anything other than a providential judgement on the Laudian campaign to reinvigorate worship according to strict liturgical guidelines: Anon., *A Looking-Glasse for All True-Hearted Christians* (London, 1642), 16–18.

⁵⁷ Anon., *A True Relation of an Apparition in the Likeness of a Bird . . . that Appeared over the Death-Beds of Some of the Children of Mr. James Oxenham of Sale Monachorum, Devon, Gent* (London, 1641). A further motive for publication is evident in the author's rhetorical flourish: 'is not satan let loose? Are not these the last times?'; C2v. It was also an opportunity to berate those who no longer believed in apparitions and spirits; C3r.

⁵⁸ HALS, Gorhambury MS VIII.B.153 [Francis Tilney to Grimston, undated document entitled 'Night visions which a poore Minister of Gods word in the County of Suffolk hath of late seene in his sleepe']. The account can be internally dated to some time after February 1642.

⁵⁹ B. Schofield (ed.), *The Knyvett Letters, 1620–1644* (London, Norfolk Rec. Soc., 20, 1949), 100–3, 105. Other examples of extraordinary or supernatural events, including witchcraft, reported in the press in 1642 can be found in M. Gaskill, *Witchfinders: A Seventeenth-Century English Tragedy* (London, 2005), 22.

forces of good and evil. In this struggle, however, the witch was no longer perceived as an outsider or external threat to the wellbeing of the body politic. On the contrary, the logic of political discourse, informed as it was by notions of inversion and contrariety, dictated that each side now viewed its opponents as confederates with witches and in some cases conflated the two. From the 1640s onwards, understanding of what it meant to talk about witchcraft in England was to become transformed by this process of politicization. Its roots, as we have seen, can be found in the early debates over the nature of the newly established Protestant Church in the reign of Elizabeth. It was not until the collapse of the unitary state and national Church in the early 1640s, however, followed by the failure of political and religious leaders thereafter to re-establish religious and political unity, that the full impact of such developments on demonological thinking, particularly the legal prosecution of witches, was felt. In what follows, I seek to chart this important process in the period immediately before and after the outbreak of the civil war, when, of course, the outcome of the struggle between King and Parliament remained unclear and recourse to the language of demonology provided ideological and emotional sustenance to the supporters of both camps. Having established the role of witchcraft in these disputes and debates, I then go on to explore in more detail how the prevalence of such thinking in the nation as a whole, combined with a unique set of factors in the eastern counties of England, helped to lay the ground for the largest witch hunt in English history.

THE WITCH AS REBEL: WITCHCRAFT, POLITICAL APOSTASY, AND SUPPORT FOR THE CROWN IN CIVIL WAR ENGLAND

The campaign to convince the people that the opposition to the established Church and King, most frequently associated with puritanism, was part of a broader conspiracy of demonic origins began in earnest in the 1630s. In 1631, for example, the Laudian Richard Corbet (1582–1635), bishop of Oxford, used the occasion of the consecration of a new chapel at Lincoln College, Oxford, to parody the puritan obsession with preaching by comparing it to a form of witchcraft.⁶⁰ Corbet's successor as bishop of Norwich, Matthew Wren (1585–1667), would appear to have shared such sentiments. In Parliament in 1641 Thomas Widdrington claimed that Wren had laid down strict rules governing what prayers were to be said in his

⁶⁰ 'All this beauty, all the worship, shall go for abomination, if the sorcerers will have it so (for such preaching is but witchcraft). It is like preaching, I confess, as the sorcerers were like Moses. They did tricks before Pharaoh, and they took the standers by, but the power of God was not in them, and they did but things like miracles. So here [presumably gesturing to the pulpit] they call up spirits, and in this circle they conjure, but the right spirit comes not up, or very seldom here of late': A. Clark (ed.), 'Consecration of Lincoln College Chapel', in *Collectanea IV* (Oxford, Oxford Hist. Soc., 47, 1905), 148. Corbet, more celebrated as a poet and a wit than as a churchman, was a loyal follower of Laud and held the diocese of Oxford from 1628 to 1632, when he was elevated to the see of Norwich: *ODNB*, sub Corbet, Richard.

diocese and that he was adamantly opposed to ‘that Monster of conceiv’d [extempore] Prayer’ which was ‘as bad to him as a Spell or a Charm [and] must not be used upon any Occasion’.⁶¹ Such views were not limited to bishops, but were shared by many among the parish clergy who supported the ecclesiastical innovations of the 1630s. As the country spiralled towards civil war, loyal preachers ransacked the scriptures in an attempt to demonize their opponents. The story of Saul’s visit to the witch of Endor—a classic tale of spiritual rebellion—was to prove a popular theme in a number of fast sermons preached at the royalist headquarters in Oxford in 1643.⁶² There can be little doubt that sermons such as these had been repeated throughout the country in the years and months prior to the outbreak of hostilities in the autumn of 1642. Henry Hancocks, for example, minister at Furneaux Pelham in Hertfordshire, was accused in the early 1640s of having compared the puritan practice of ‘gadding’ to sermons to ‘the sinne of Witch-craft and Idolatry’.⁶³ Likewise Daniel Whitby, sequestered at Theydon Mount in Essex for maintaining ‘Superstitious Innovations’, was accused by some of his parishioners of denouncing them as ‘no better then Witches and Devils’ for refusing to conform to the new injunctions on kneeling at the altar rails. Whitby’s response to these charges is revealing, for he claimed that he did no such thing, but simply preached from 1 Samuel 15:23 in order to dissuade his congregation from disobedience and rebellion for ‘I would not have them partakers with Witches and Devils’.⁶⁴ The insinuation here was that such practices—gadding to sermons, refusal to obey Church edicts—were tantamount to acts of religious, and by extension political, apostasy. Hancocks and Whitby, moreover, were not alone in invoking this particular passage of scripture (1 Samuel 15:23), which was to form a central motif of loyalist preaching for the rest of the century. Indeed, as I shall suggest here and in Chapter 6, it was destined to play a crucial role in transforming the understanding of large numbers of devoted royalists and Anglicans concerning the

⁶¹ C. Wren, *Parentilia. Or Memoirs of the Family of the Wrens* (London, 1750), 21. His opponents retaliated in suitable fashion in 1641 when they described him as acting like a man possessed with devils; see below, 104. For Wren’s pivotal role in politicizing many parts of East Anglia that were later effected by the Hopkins witch hunts, see below, 115–16.

⁶² See, for example, [H. Leslie], *A Sermon Preached at the Publique Fast* [St Mary’s, Oxford, 9 February 1643] (Oxford, 1643), 11; T. Twittee, *The Art of Salvation* [St Mary’s, Oxford, n.d.] (Oxford, 1643), 8.

⁶³ J. White, *The First Century of Scandalous, Malignant Priests* (London, 1643), 17. For Hancocks (not Horrocks, as given by White), see *Wal. Rev.*, 199. Hancocks was also accused of filling his sermons, as well as ‘his ordinary discourses’, with ‘bitter invectives and slanders against those that are religiously affected, especially presenting them under the names of Puritans and Round-heads’: *ibid.*

⁶⁴ D. Whitby, *The Vindication of a True Protestant, and Faithfull Servant to his Church* (Oxford, 1644), 3, 4. For a summary of the full list of charges against Whitby, see *Wal. Rev.*, 168–9. The suggestion that Whitby had called some of his congregation witches echoes the complaint made against the ceremonialist vicar of Bewdley, John Boraston (d.1688), who was denigrated by his puritan opponents in the 1640s as a man ‘of a very proud and contentious spirit’ who lorded it over his parishioners and called ‘honest men knaves and honest women witches’: J. R. Burton, *A History of Bewdley* (London, 1883), 57. At some point in the early 1640s, he witnessed the diabolical possession of one of his parishioners, Joyce Dovey: Anon., *A Strange and True Relation of a Young Woman Possest with the Devil* (London, 1647), 2. Despite his avowed royalism and support for the established church, he later received the support of Richard Baxter and became a leading figure in the Worcestershire association of ministers in the 1650s.

nature of witchcraft, as conventionally defined, in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Prior to the reign of Charles I, the biblical injunction linking witchcraft with rebellion was widely interpreted as a rebuke to those suspected of the crime of spiritual apostasy as opposed to those engaged in sedition.⁶⁵ Loyalists and puritans both cited the text in this way, or, as in the case of the Norfolk preacher Samuel Garey (c.1583–1646), invoked it in order to defend the divinely ordained authority of James I from the treacherous and Satanic conspiracies hatched by *external* enemies to the body politic such as Roman Catholics.⁶⁶ One of the first recorded usages of the text from Samuel as a contribution to the growing *internal* political debates in England occurred in 1627 when the court preacher Isaac Bargrave (1586–1643) recalled the rebellion of Saul in a sermon devoted to a defence of the forced loan. Even so, Bargrave made it clear that he conceived of this rebellious ‘witchcraft’ as a form of spiritual apostasy and, in line with traditional Protestant thinking, a sin against the first table.⁶⁷ In the latter stages of the Personal Rule, citation of 1 Samuel 15:23 would grow in frequency and begin to take on a more overtly partisan and political charge. In 1637, for example, the staunch conformist Thomas Hurst (d.1680), who would later devote his life to defending the royal cause, alluded to the taint of witchcraft that clung to rebels in an assize sermon preached at Lincoln. In similar fashion, bishop Wren lamented the failure of so many of Charles’ subjects to follow the biblical injunction to obey the powers that be, as enshrined in scriptural texts such as 1 Samuel 15:23, concluding that ‘nothing more than this Sorcery and Idolatry, I fear me it is, that of late hath so much troubled our Israel’.⁶⁸ The onset of the crisis in Scotland, which would itself

⁶⁵ The full wording of the verse renders such a meaning as most likely: ‘For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. *Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.*’

⁶⁶ Samuel Garey, *Great Britains Little Calendar: Or, Triple Diarie, In Remembrance of Three Daies. Divided into Three Treatises. 1. Britanniae Vota: or God Save the King: for the 24. Day of March, the Day of His Majesties Happy Proclamation. 2. Caesaris Hostes: or, The Tragedy of Traytors: for the Fifth of August: the Day of the Bloudy Gowries Treason, and of his Hignes Blessed Preservation. 3. Amphitheatrum Sclerum: or, The Transcendent of Treason* [5 November] . . . *Whereunto is Annexed a Short Disswasive from Poperie* (London, 1618), 11. Garey’s work is replete with allusions to the sorcerous and necromantic character of Roman Catholicism, which he dismissed as ‘a witchcraft of religion’: see *ibid.*, 113, 121, 124, 172, 174, 268; *A Short Disswasive*, 12r. For puritan references to 1 Samuel 15:23 as an example of spiritual apostasy, see, for example, R. Rogers, *Samuel’s Encounter with Saul* (London, 1620), 190–202; W. Rensold, *Four Sermons* (London, 1627), 24, 77.

⁶⁷ I. Bargrave, *A Sermon Preached Before King Charles* [27 March 1627] (London, 1627), 7–8. For the controversy evoked by this sermon, see R. Cust, *The Forced Loan and English Politics 1626–1628* (Oxford, 1987), 62, 65–7, 70, 176–82, 248, 300, 305; P. Clark, ‘Thomas Scott and the Growth of Urban Opposition to the Early Stuart Regime’, *Historical Journal*, 21 (1978), 18–19. For Bargrave, who held the post of dean of Canterbury as well as the rectory of Chartham, Kent, see *Wal. Rev.*, 210 and *ODNB*, sub Bargrave, Isaac.

⁶⁸ T. Hurst, *The Descent of Authority: Or, The Magistrates Patent from Heaven* [Lincoln, 13 March 1637] (London, 1637), 23, 32; Wren, *Parentilia*, 131. For Hurst, see *Wal. Rev.*, 252–3. For another example of a loyalist preacher invoking 1 Samuel 15:23 in defence of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and Laud’s campaign of the ‘beauty of holiness’, see E. Boughen, *A Sermon Concerning Decencie and Order in the Church* [Woodchurch, Kent, 30 April 1638] (London, 1638), 24. Seemingly unequivocal in its meaning, 1 Samuel 15:23 was nonetheless cited by critics of the Caroline regime. See, for example, the case of the ‘enthusiast’ and visionary Andrew Humphrey, who in 1632 claimed to have alighted at

precipitate a recall of Parliament in the spring of 1640, undoubtedly encouraged further exploration of what some loyalist preachers perceived as the demonic origins of puritanically inspired rebellion. In 1639, Malachi Harris (c.1607–1684), minister to the English merchants in Hamburg, welcomed news of peace in the first Bishops' War, but could not resist lambasting those who encouraged such revolt, citing Samuel's exhortation to Saul and noting in the process that 'mutterings and whisperings are the language of wizards, and [the] Dialect of Hell'.⁶⁹ Twenty years later, the eminent Anglican preacher Laurence Womock (1612–1686) concurred when, in a sermon celebrating the proclamation of Charles II, he too cited the text from Samuel equating rebellion and witchcraft and went on to argue that the civil war had begun 'as Witchcraft doth in mutterings and murmerings of the lips [for] the Prince is wounded first in Pulpits and Pamphlets, and Corners, ever murdered by the tongue in his reputation, before he is murdered by the Ax or dagger in his Person'.⁷⁰

During the civil war itself, loyal preachers consistently harangued their audiences with dire warnings of the fate awaiting those who, like Saul, engaged in the 'witchcraft of rebellion'. Showpiece sermons, preached before the King and his Parliament at Oxford on highly charged occasions such as official fasts or red-letter days, were frequently appropriated by devoted royalist ministers as a suitable opportunity to expatiate at length on the parallels between rebels and witches. Nathaniel Bernard (d.1656) and Barten Holyday (1593–1661), for example, both chose 1 Samuel 15:23 as their set text, which they used as a platform to demonstrate their wide knowledge of biblical, classical, and modern demonology. Bernard, for example, cited extensively from the *Malleus Maleficarum* and the *Formicarius* of Johann Nider (c.1380–1438), while Holyday alluded to the work of the sixteenth-century French demonologist Jean Bodin (1530–1596).⁷¹ Works such as these

random on this text while seeking inspiration for his political prophecies: *CSPD, 1631–1633* [Humphrey to Secretary Coke, 1 June 1632], 344. Humphrey had earlier claimed to have predicted, from a vision, the failure of the expedition of the duke of Buckingham to the Isle of Rhé: *ibid.*, 291.

⁶⁹ M. Harris, *Brittaines Hallelujah or a Sermon of Thanksgiving for the Happy Pacification in Brittain Preached in the English Church at Hamburgh before . . . Sir Thomas Rowe* (Hamburg?, 1639), 20. Harris would appear here to be conflating two scriptural references to the demonic, 1 Samuel 15:23 and Isaiah 8:19 ['And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? For the living to the dead?']. The Scots were widely held at the time to be tainted by the curse of witchcraft. In 1639, the earl of Cork's son-in-law, Lord Barrymore, complained to Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford, that all his attempts to recruit soldiers in Munster to fight for the King in Scotland had been undermined by Sir Piers Crosby and others who had frightened away multitudes of volunteers with 'tales of Scottish witchcrafts and enchantments': Chatsworth House, Lismore Papers, vol. 20, no. 38 [Barrymore to Strafford, 26 May 1639].

⁷⁰ L. Womock, *The Dressing Up of the Crown* [Bury St Edmunds, 17 May 1660] (London, 1661), 22.

⁷¹ N. Bernard, *ΕΞΟΠΤΙΣΤΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΤΙΜΑΧΙΑΣ, or A Looking-Glasse for Rebellion* [St Mary's, Oxford, 16 June 1644] (Oxford, 1644), 11 [Pliny], 12–13 [*Malleus*], 13 [Nider], 14 [*Malleus*], 16 [Exodus 22:18], 19 [Virgil], 22 [Ovid], 23 [1 Samuel 28:15]; B. Holyday, 'Of Rebellion' [St Mary's, Oxford, 19 May 1644] in *Against Disloyalty, Fower Sermons Preach'd in the Times of the Late Troubles* (Oxford, 1661), 84 [Bodin]. Bernard claimed to have been ejected from a living in Essex in 1642: Bernard, *Looking-Glasse*, A2v; *Wal. Rev.*, 146. For Holyday, see *ibid.*, 297.

make it clear that many preachers who supported the royal cause and upheld episcopacy and religious innovations were now more than happy to reassert their faith in the reality of witchcraft. Both Bernard and Holyday, for example, devoted sections of their sermons to refuting the arguments of those who questioned the existence of witches.⁷² Others echoed their concerns and repeatedly returned to Samuel's admonition to Saul in order to depict their puritan adversaries as little better than witches. The sequestered Suffolk minister, Paul Gosnold, was typical. Preaching before the King and royal Parliament at Oxford in the summer of 1644, he invoked 1 Samuel 15:23 and proceeded to lambast those who made religion a 'specious pretext' for rebellion. In so doing, he accounted them no better than witches, who, it was claimed, 'when they first covenant with the Devill, renounce their Baptisme [and] renege their Christianity'.⁷³ Gosnold and his associates at Oxford may have been preaching to the converted, but there is a wealth of evidence to suggest that such views received a wide airing throughout much of the nation. Edward Symmons (c.1607–1649), for example, echoed Gosnold when, in 1644, while preaching to the garrison at Shrewsbury, he accused his former puritan associates in the Church of 'bewitching' the people into rebellion by 'specious and religious shewes'. Four years later he predicted that 'the very people whom you have seduced will . . . teare you in pieces as you goe in the Streets, as they did Dr Lamb (whom they took for a Conjurer) some 18 years agoe; and will pluck you as small as the people of Rome did Sejanus in times past'.⁷⁴

There can be little doubt that sermons such as these, replete with demonological allusions attesting to the sinfulness of the act of rebellion against a divinely ordained monarch, were preached, repeatedly, throughout England in the late 1630s and 1640s. Once the pulpits were closed to royalists, such views found an alternative outlet in the press, where they featured in popular newspapers as well as satirical pamphlets and more serious works of political commentary. Supporters of

⁷² Bernard, *Looking-Glasse*, 21–2; Holyday, 'Of Rebellion', 62–6. Stuart Clark has noted how both men equated such scepticism with their political adversaries, an action that would appear, as we shall see, to have had little basis in fact: Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 611.

⁷³ P. Gosnold, *A Sermon Preached at the Publique Fast . . . Before the Honorable Members of the Two Houses of Parliament, There Assembled* [St Mary's, Oxford, 9 August 1644] (Oxford, 1644), 23–4; cf. Robert Chestlin, who compared those puritan ministers returning from New England to take up positions vacated by loyal, sequestered clergy with witches who renounce their baptism: [R. Chestlin], *Persecutio Undecima. The Churches Eleventh Persecution. Or, a Briefe of the Puritan Persecution of the Protestant Clergy of the Church of England* (London, 1648), 21. Gosnold was ejected from the living of Bradfield St Clare in Suffolk in March 1644: *Wal. Rev.*, 336.

⁷⁴ E. Symmons, *A Militarie Sermon, Wherein by the Word of God, the Nature and Disposition of a Rebell is Discovered* [Shrewsbury, 3 March 1644] (Oxford, 1644), 16–17, 18; E. Symmons, *A Vindication of King Charles: Or, a Loyal Subject's Duty* ([London], 1647), 282. In raising the name of Sejanus, Symmons may have been unconsciously evoking the controversial speech of the parliamentarian Sir John Eliot in May 1626 in which he compared the duke of Buckingham, patron of the sorcerer Dr John Lambe, with the Roman magician Sejanus: R. Trevor-Davies, *Four Centuries of Witch-Beliefs with Special Reference to the Great Rebellion* (London, 1947), 120n. For Symmons, who was ejected from the living of Rayne in Essex, see *Wal. Rev.*, 164–5; *ODNB*. During his 'oppositionist' phase in 1632, Symmons, a friend and colleague of the celebrated puritan Stephen Marshall (d.1655), had compared oppressive officials of the church courts to *lamiae*, those mythical monsters who were said to suck the blood of, and devour, children: E. Symmons, *Four Sermons Wherein is Made a Fourfold Discovery* (London, 1642), i [Halstead, 12 April 1632], 21–2.

Parliament were routinely castigated in popular weeklies such as *Mercurius Aulicus* as agents of the Devil and akin to witches, particularly in regard to their preference for making covenants and other diabolical bargains.⁷⁵ Not surprisingly, when news of the mass trials in Essex and Suffolk reached the capital in 1645, the royalist press made much of this particular coincidence, for as one news-sheet gleefully reported, were not these counties ‘from the beginning...only the Rebels Quarters’.⁷⁶ Again and again, royalist hacks and pamphleteers compared Saul’s witch-like apostasy to the stance taken by those who championed the cause of Parliament. Like pharaoh’s magicians—another favoured text—the rebels had ‘enchanted the People into their Disobedience’, but like ‘the Magitians phantastick Grashoppers and frogges’, their victories were vacuous, ‘things empty in themselves, and without all reality or substance...faine to appear as the Schoolmen say the wicked spirits used to doe, in shapes of Ayre condens’.⁷⁷ At the same time, royalist newswriters warned their opponents that they would share a similar fate to that suffered by witches, for it was a commonplace among demonologists that once captured and defeated witches were routinely deserted by the Devil and left to ‘the stroke of Iustice’.⁷⁸ The defeat of the King saw little change in the character of these publications. Indeed, if anything, it spurred on disaffected royal apologists to ever greater heights of demonological rhetoric. ‘God doth hold Witches and Rebels in one and the same detestation’ declared one such anonymous author in 1648, and his views were echoed in countless similar diatribes.⁷⁹ Satirists had a field day. The recent witch trials in East Anglia provided a particularly rich vein of material with which to parody the rebellious excesses of Parliament and its supporters. In 1648, for example, a satirical mini drama appeared featuring the arraignment of Mrs Parliament (‘this damn’d Geneva Witch’) on a charge of bewitching the nation in the shape of the unfortunate Mrs England. Not only was

⁷⁵ *Mercurius Aulicus*, 331 [25 June 1643], 447 [17 August 1643], 543 [27 September 1643], 917 [1 April 1644], 962 [27 April 1644]. For another example of a cheap pamphlet linking the covenant with witchcraft, see Anon., *Lex Talionis. Or, A Declamation against Mr. Challenger* (London?, 1647), 3.

⁷⁶ *Mercurius Aulicus*, 1697–8 [10 August 1645]. The following day, the pro-parliamentary newssheets were said to be ‘like Witches [who] confesse impossibilities’: *ibid.*, 1699. Inevitably, Parliament’s supporters reacted in kind to such innuendo. When the royalist astrologer Sir George Wharton (1617–1681) alluded to 1 Samuel 15:23 in the course of an attack upon the practice of his parliamentarian opposite, John Booker (1602–1667), the latter replied: ‘your Oxford Rebellion is indeed Witch-craft it self; It were too tedious to number up those many state-Conjurors there, which continually work with the Devill for the raising of more, and greater stormes to wrack the small Vessel of the Kingdom, wherein Wee, our Religion, and fortunes, are embarked’: G. Naworth [i.e. Sir George Wharton], *Mercurio-Coelico Mastix* (Oxford, 1644), 4; Anon., *Mercurius Vapulans or Naworth Strip and Whipt* (London, 1644), 4–5.

⁷⁷ *Mercurius Anti-Britanicus*, 5–6 [4–18 August 1645]. The secondary reference here is to Jannes and Jambres, court magicians to pharaoh: Exodus 7:11–12; 2 Timothy 3:8–9. A few days later *Mercurius Anti-Britanicus* too was depicting rival newspaper editors as acting like witches, when it compared one of the joint authors of the parliamentary *Britanicus* to the ‘woman with a familiar Spirit in the Scripture’ [i.e. the witch of Endor]: *ibid.*, 28. The fact that both these royalist publications—*Mercurius Aulicus* and *Mercurius Anti-Britanicus*—raised the issue of witchcraft at this time has been cited as evidence of their joint authorship by Sir John Berkenhead: P. W. Thomas, *Sir John Berkenhead, 1617–1679* (Oxford, 1969), 118.

⁷⁸ *Mercurius Academicus*, 81–2 [9 February 1646].

⁷⁹ Anon., *A Wonder a Mercury Without a Lye In’s Mouth* (London?, 1648), 1–2.

Mrs Parliament subjected to strip-search in order to discover the witch's mark and evidence of her feeding familiars (Manchester, Lenthall, et al.), but she pointedly refused to recite the Lord's Prayer and credo (a common proof of guilt in witchcraft cases), having long denied its validity on the authority of Nurse Synod. Predictably, she ends up being dragged off to execution.⁸⁰ There was nothing subtle about such works—they were, after all, intended for a popular audience—but they were nonetheless highly effective in exploiting popular fears surrounding the legality of the war and the general direction of events in the late 1640s.

It would be a mistake, however, to dismiss recourse to the language of demonology, whether by royalist or parliamentary writers, as mere propaganda devoid of deeper meaning and significance. This is evident, for example, in works of political philosophy such as that composed by the imprisoned royalist divine Michael Hudson (1605–1648). In *The Divine Right of Government* (1647), Hudson defended theocratic kingship by contrasting it with the 'polyarchy' of the Devil's dominions, an approach that required a full-scale disquisition on angelology and much discussion of the role played by witches in such polities.⁸¹ Hudson was not engaging here in mere polemic, but rather expressing what he believed to be fundamental truths about the nature of government, both earthly and cosmic, in mid-seventeenth-century England. Fellow royalists shared Hudson's preoccupations with the demonic and utilized a wide range of media in order to make sense of the religious and political turmoil of the 1640s. Much of this literature was clearly private and consolatory rather than intended for public consumption. Such motives would appear to have prompted the former royal judge Sir Robert Heath (1575–1649) to pen a manuscript 'meditation' on 1 Samuel 15:23, the work being written sometime in the early stages of the civil war.⁸² For many royalists, witchcraft was, in the words of Lois Potter, 'psychologically useful' in providing an explanation for the popularity of the parliamentary cause and the victories of its

⁸⁰ *Mercurius Melancholicus* [i.e. John Crouch], *Mistris Parliament Her Gossiping* (London?, 1648). This work was part of a series that deliberately sought to emulate the medium of the popular ballad and broadsheet. For a useful discussion of this and related works, and their employment of the language of the monstrous and demonic, see L. Potter, *Secret Rites and Secret Writing: Royalist Literature 1641–1660* (Cambridge, 1989), 144–5. The Hopkins episode, of course, would later provide further riches for the pen of Samuel Butler in his *Hudibras*. The personification of demonic evil in the shape of leading parliamentarians certainly pre-dates the publication of *Mercurius Melancholicus*. In 1643, for example, the recently relieved town of Buckingham was said by royalist writers to have lain under the 'sorceries' of Hampden and Pym: D. J. Elliott, *Buckingham. The Loyal and Ancient Borough* (London, 1975), 110–11.

⁸¹ M. Hudson, *The Divine Right of Government: 1. Naturall, and 2. Politique. More Particularly of Monarchy: The Onely Legitimate and Natural Spece of Politique Government* ([London], 1647), 17–21 [mispaginated in original], and *passim*. For Hudson, who provided practical as well as theoretical support for the royal cause in the 1640s, see *ODNB*, sub Hudson, Michael. Hudson's citation of witchcraft within the context of support for divine right monarchy, as well as the views of like-minded colleagues, formed part of a European-wide world-view in which witchcraft and 'mystical politics' were natural bedfellows: see especially Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 602–18.

⁸² BL, Egerton MS 2982, fos 81–4 [incorrectly foliated in original]. Heath's discourse leaves little doubt that this former royal judge and ardent supporter of Charles I had few qualms in asserting the reality of witchcraft against its detractors, though how this affected his judgement while on circuit is difficult to ascertain. For Heath's life and career, see P. E. Kopperman, *Sir Robert Heath, 1575–1649: Window on an Age* (Woodbridge, 1989).

armies. According to the lawyer Fabian Phillips (1601–1690), the people, possessed like the Gadarene swine and bewitched by the preaching of a ‘seditious Clergie’, had run ‘head-long . . . into the witchcraft’ of rebellion. They were the victims of a form of collective possession not unlike that suffered by demoniacs, and in common with such men and women they were largely blameless, having been seduced into disobedience through the siren tongues of puritan ministers and radical sectaries.⁸³ Similar thinking permeated royalist discourse throughout this period. The former parliamentarian statesman and Presbyterian Denzil Holles (1599–1680) thus accused those who did Cromwell’s bidding in London in 1647 as acting like Jannes and Jambres in ‘bewitching’ the governors of the city.⁸⁴ Witchcraft was also invoked to explain why so many people had chosen the wrong side in the civil war. James Howell, for example, argued in 1643 that Parliament had deliberately kept the King’s declarations out of sight of the people for fear that they might become ‘unbewicht’, adding for good measure the injunction from 1 Samuel 15:23. These were not mere rhetorical flourishes. In 1641, an illiterate parishioner in the village of Lidsing in Kent recanted his former signature to a petition designed to rid the parish of its unpopular, non-preaching minister on the grounds that ‘he thinkes hee was bewicht, and that if ever the devill had power over him, he had power over him then’.⁸⁵

⁸³ Potter, *Secret Rites*, 145; [F. Phillips], *King Charles the First, No Man of Blood* (London?, 1649), 21. Sometime in the early 1640s Daniel Featley (d.1645), the sequestered rector of Acton, Middlesex, was said to have asked his congregation: ‘Who have bewitched them, that they would believe Bedlam shall be so farre enlarged, and the spirit of frenzie possess old England, that they should have the like successe here, as their cozen germanes the Anabaptists had at Munster’: B. Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus* (Oxford?, 1646), 170–1. Similar themes found repeated expression in the writings of the court preacher and bishop of Ossory Griffith Williams (d.1672): see, for example, *The Discovery of Mysteries* (Oxford, 1643), 7, 66, 101; *A Sermon Preached at the Publique Fast* [St Mary’s, Oxford, 8 March 1644] (Oxford, 1644), 16. As an aged bishop in Ireland after the Restoration, Williams claimed he was the victim of conspiratorial witches: Bodl., Carte MSS 36, fo. 568 [Michael Boyle, archbishop of Dublin, to Ormond, 17 November 1668]; 50, fo. 34 [Ormond to Captain George Matthew, 25 May 1669].

⁸⁴ D. Holles, *Memoirs of Denzil Lord Holles, Baron of Ifield in Sussex, from the Year 1641 to 1648* (London, 1699), 110. Writing from exile in France in 1649, Holles painted a damning picture of ‘the two grand Designers of the Ruin of Three Kingdoms’, Oliver Cromwell and his sidekick, Oliver St John, referring to their meetings or ‘Sabbaths, where you have laid by Your assumed Shapes . . . and resumed Your own; imparting each to other, and both of You to Your Fellow Witches, the bottom of Your Designs’: *ibid.*, xiv–xv. The accusation made by Holles regarding the ‘bewitchment’ of the city fathers in 1647 bears a striking resemblance to a speech addressed to the leading citizens of the city in the summer of that year in which the anonymous author (Holles?) lamented the spread of religious division and accused the parliamentary leadership of lulling the people into something ‘worse then witchcraft’: *HMC. Calendar of the Manuscripts of . . . the Marquess of Salisbury*, ed. D. Owen (London, 1971), 398–9.

⁸⁵ [J. Howell], *The True Informer, who . . . Discovereth unto the World the Chiefe Causes of the Sad Distempers in Great Brittain, and Ireland* (Oxford, 1643), 38; L. B. Larking (ed.), *Proceedings, Principally in the County of Kent, in Connection with the Parliament Called in 1640, and Especially with the Committee of Religion Appointed in that Year . . . from the Collections of Sir Edward Dering* (London, Camden Soc., 80, 1862), 168. The royalist Howell had no doubts as to the reality of witchcraft. In 1647 and 1648 he informed friends of recent events in East Anglia which he saw as a natural consequence of a world that had been ‘turned upside down’: J. Howell, *Epistolae Ho-Eliaenae*, ed. J. Jacobs, 2 vols (London, 1890–92), ii, 506 [Howell to Endymion Porter, 3 February 1647], 514–15 [same to same, 20 February 1647]; iii, 551 [Howell to Sir Edward Spencer, 20 February

The demonological associations of witchcraft and rebellion were thus widely disseminated by royalist preachers and pamphleteers using the pulpit and the presses, but they also found expression in another medium that gained wide popularity in loyalist circles in the 1640s and 1650s, namely poetry. Much verse was, by its very nature, private and consolatory. It also provided many royalists, especially after 1649, with a valuable outlet for the articulation of political angst and religious despair, which frequently appeared dressed in the garb of the language of demonology. Early poems like those written by John Cleveland (1613–1658) at Oxford in 1642–43 were principally satirical in tone, mocking the Scots for their rebellious instincts and comparing them to witches, who ‘do but whet your pen, Scratch till the blood come, they’ll not hurt you then’.⁸⁶ The mood of much royalist verse, however, not surprisingly, changed after defeat in the civil wars and the King’s execution in 1649. In that year the former bishop, royal preacher, and poet Henry King (1592–1669), in an elegy on the life of Charles I, reflected gloomily on the propensity of the victors to devour even their own supporters as ‘witches who their contracts have unsworn, By their own Devils are in pieces torn’.⁸⁷ Likewise, Margaret Cavendish (d.1673), the wife of the duke of Newcastle, attempted to make sense of the events of the early 1640s from her exile in France through writing poetry, much of it informed by the language of contemporary demonology. In ‘The Ruine of an Island’, for example, she described in barely veiled terms the lamentable condition of contemporary England where:

To Parents children unnat’rally grow,
And former Friend-ship now’s turn’d cruell Foe,
For Innocency no Protection had,
Religious Men were thought to be stark mad,
In Witches Wizzards did they put their Trust,
Extortions, Bribes, were thought to be most just.⁸⁸

1648]. For Howell’s religious and political beliefs, and their debt to neo-stoicism, see D. Woolf, ‘Conscience, Constancy and Ambition in the Career and Writings of James Howell’, in J. Morrill, P. Slack, and D. Woolf (eds), *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England. Essays Presented to G. E. Aylmer* (Oxford, 1993), 243–78.

⁸⁶ J. Cleveland, ‘The Rebell Scot’ (1643), ll. 31–32; cf. ‘The King’s Disguise’ (1646), ll. 106–8.

⁸⁷ H. King, *An Elegy upon the Most Incomparable K. Charles I* (London?, 1649), 12 [ll. 295–304]. King’s barb would appear to have been aimed at those who had previously sworn the covenant but now wished to repent of their former folly. The previous year, King satirically implied that it wasn’t necessary to employ a witchfinder like Matthew Hopkins (‘The States allow’d Witch-finder General’) in order to discover who assisted Parliament in its wicked dealings: ‘We could with little help of art reveal / Those learn’d Magitians with whom You deal . . . We know Your holy Flamens, and can tell / What Spirits Vote within the Oracle; / Have found the spells and Incantations too, / By whose assistance You such wonders do. / For divers Years the credit of your warrs / Hath been kept up by these Familiars’: ‘An Elegy on Sir Charles Lucas, and Sir George Lisle’ (1648), ll. 111–138.

⁸⁸ M. Cavendish, duchess of Newcastle, *Poems and Fancies* (London, 1653), 120. The titles of other poems in this collection reflect the pervasive influence of witchcraft on Cavendish’s thinking: ‘A Discourse of the Power of Devils’ (108–9); ‘Witches of Lapland’ (181; paginated in error as 157); untitled (213). Her pronounced scepticism with regard to the reality of witchcraft, evident in various prose interludes in the same work, is discussed more fully below, 268.

In short, the rebellion against Charles I was widely perceived in royalist circles as nothing less than an act of political witchcraft, neatly captured in the pithy maxim of the defrocked Anglican minister and hermetic philosopher Thomas Vaughan (1621–1666), who in 1650 opined that ‘a Witch is a Rebel in Physicks, and a Rebell is a Witch in Politicks’ for ‘one acts against Nature, the other against Order [and] both are in League with the Devill as the first father of Discord and Sorcerie’.⁸⁹

While some were more reticent than others about expressing their innermost thoughts on what they saw as a diabolical assault on the old order in religion and politics, taken together, the tendency of Anglican and royalist commentators to envisage rebellion as a species of witchcraft provided a consistent motif of loyalist discourse throughout the 1640s and beyond. Much of this writing was clearly aimed at the popular market and was propagandistic in tone, seeking to counter the London presses that were overwhelmingly supportive of Parliament. But many of the works discussed here, including sermons and works of political theory, were surely aimed at a wider audience that sought to reaffirm rather than persuade its readers of the righteousness of the royal cause. The learned nature of many of these publications, replete with biblical, classical, and modern allusions, guaranteed an elite and privileged readership.⁹⁰ The object of all this scribbling and preaching, as their opponents duly acknowledged, was an informed populace that was more than happy to debate current affairs in what some have seen as an emerging ‘public sphere’, and to do so using a language of political engagement saturated with the demonic. Witchcraft, in short, was on everyone’s lips and constituted an integral element of political discussion that permeated all levels of society. A particularly good example of the ubiquity of such language is evident from the encounters recorded by a royalist Essex barrister in the 1640s, when for much of that period he criss-crossed the counties of East Anglia seeking refuge in the homes of family, friends, and other well wishers. During the course of his travels, he frequently engaged local men, many of whom were ardent supporters of Parliament, in political discussion, and more often than not he attempted to persuade them of the error of their ways by recounting the diabolical nature of rebellion. On one such occasion at Dalham in Suffolk, he encountered a blacksmith, ‘a stubborn and rebellious Roundhead’, whom he sought to convert to the royal cause:

I did oftentimes very freely converse with him, always endeavouring to evince, and rectifie his depraved judgement, to molifie his mind, and by Scripture, law and reason,

⁸⁹ Eugenius Philalethes [i.e. Thomas Vaughan], *Anthroposophia Theomagica: Or A Discourse of the Nature of Man and His State After Death* (London, 1650), 31–2; cf. Vaughan’s brother Henry (1622–1695), who shared his political and religious sympathies, and refused the blandishments of the Cromwellian authorities in his native Breconshire despite ‘Your Sorcery/and smooth inducements’: H. Vaughan, ‘The Proffer’, in *Silex Scintillans: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations. The Second Edition, in Two Books* (London, 1655), ii, 9 [ll. 34–5].

⁹⁰ For further examples of classical references to witchcraft, see J. Tarlton, *A Remedy for the Warres: Or, Certaine Deplorable Expressions, of the Great Miseries, and Wofull Effects, which the . . . Warres, have Lately Produced . . . in this our Kingdome of England* (London, 1648), 190, 202, 246 [‘the horrid sin of rebellion like the Witchcraft of Circe’ has transformed the orthodox doctrines of the Church of England ‘into another creature’]; [Philipps], *King Charles the First, No Man of Blood*, 66 [‘the blood of old England is let out by a greater witchcraft and cousenage then that of Medea’].

to convince him of his errors, and ever presenting to the view of his apprehension, that ugly monster of Rebellion, in as hideous and horrible a shape, as I was able to limne it out, or blaze forth the pedigree thereof, telling him that the Devil was the first father of Rebellion, and that all others, that were infected with that witchcraft, were his own undoubted children, and the very proper souldiers that fought under the devils banner.⁹¹

THE GODLY RESPONSE: WITCHCRAFT, SPIRITUAL APOSTASY, AND PURITAN OPPOSITION TO THE CAROLINE CHURCH AND STATE

The blacksmith's response to Wenlock's goading is not recorded, but it is safe to assume that as a committed parliamentarian he was well equipped to reply in kind, should he have felt so inclined. From the late 1620s onwards, in what looks like a mirror image of the royalist and Anglican recourse to demonology as a rhetorical weapon in the war of words that preceded and accompanied the civil war, opposition to the Stuarts was increasingly articulated in language indebted to the demonic. In line with the political conservatism of mainstream puritan thinking, the focus of much of this opposition was not the King, but those advisers closest to him, both in Church and state, who like the evil counsellors in the Old Testament were accused of poisoning the King against his subjects. One of the earliest targets, of course, was George Villiers, duke of Buckingham (1592–1628), whose diabolical credentials in the eyes of his critics were greatly exaggerated by his unfortunate association with the conjuror Dr John Lambe (d.1628).⁹² Lambe's murder and the duke's assassination early in the reign of Charles I may have removed one demonic obstacle to political reconciliation, but others soon took their place. Chief among these was William Laud, who, as archbishop of Canterbury from 1633, was largely responsible for imposing the ceremonial and doctrinal innovations associated with Arminianism upon the Church of England. While historians continue to debate the nature, extent, and significance of these developments on the three kingdoms in the 1630s, there is little doubt that for a substantial minority of Charles' subjects they represented a diabolically inspired challenge to Calvinist orthodoxy and true

⁹¹ J. Wenlock, *To the Most Illustrious, High and Mighty Majesty of Charles the II... the Humble Declaration of John Wenlock of Langham, in the County of Essex Esquire* (London, 1662), 40.

⁹² For a recent account of the wider political significance of the murder of John Lambe at the hands of a London 'mob', see A. Bellany, 'The Murder of John Lambe: Crowd Violence, Court Scandal and Popular Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, 200 (2008), 37–76. An important aspect of Bellany's work focuses on the way in which Lambe's murder resonated through the succeeding years of political crisis, and how it was often re-invoked at specific moments. Such thinking underpins Malcolm Gaskill's recent study of the trial of Anne Bodenhams, a former servant of Lambe, for witchcraft at Salisbury in 1653: M. Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, Politics and Memory in Seventeenth-Century England', *Historical Journal*, 50 (2007), 289–308. For other contemporaneous attempts to stigmatize the duke of Buckingham and his family and entourage with the taint of diabolism and witchcraft, see T. Cogswell, 'The Return of the "Deade Alive": the Earl of Bristol and Dr Eglisham in the Parliament of 1626 and in Caroline Political Culture', *English Historical Review*, 128 (2013), 545 and *passim*.

godliness. In particular, the perception of many that the religious policies pursued by Charles I, Laud, and his bishops constituted a conspiratorial attempt to impose Roman Catholicism on an unsuspecting people encouraged critics of the regime to envisage these developments within the conceptual framework of a cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil. Witchcraft, as a result, figured prominently in puritan and parliamentary circles as the war of words escalated from the late 1620s onwards.

Laud and his bishops, of course, bore the brunt of this invective. William Prynne (1600–1669) set the tone in 1636 when he devoted a large section of his *Looking-Glasse for all Lordly Prelates* to demonstrating that it was ever the case that ‘Popish Prelates [had] enchanted divers kinges and others with their sorceries and conjurations, to cause them to give up their royall power & prerogatives.’ In addition to citing biblical and recent historical examples, including the ‘bewitchment’ of Henry VIII by Thomas Wolsey, Prynne recalled, from personal experience, attempts by Catholic priests to seduce converts through the use of magic amulets and enchanted crucifixes. The tone of the piece was clear. If Laud and his bishops had become ensnared by the magic of the Jesuits, and were now inclined to turn their powers against ‘the godlyest Ministers and people, whom they revile and persecute under the name of Puritans’, then they would ultimately fail in their objectives for ‘surely there is no enchantment against Iacob, Neither is there any divination against Israel’. A year later Prynne’s fellow martyr John Bastwick (c.1595–1654) would echo these sentiments when he described the persecutors of the godly as ‘wizards of state . . . that bewitch men with presents’.⁹³ To a large extent, the views expressed by critics of the regime like Prynne and Bastwick were predicated on a deep-seated hostility to the Church of Rome and an accompanying commonplace of Protestant thought that equated ‘papisty’ with magic and witchcraft. The logic of inversionary thinking demanded, moreover, that diabolism was widely associated with all things Catholic. For much of the period before the Personal Rule of Charles I, such ideas tended, if anything, to possess a unifying quality. The Pope and his various emissaries, especially the Jesuits, represented the antithesis of the true faith and an externalized threat to the peace of the body politic. As such, fears over internal differences among English Protestants were often displaced onto that vulnerable ‘other’, the Catholic, who became associated with witchcraft through the dominant discourse of argument *a contrariis* and the logic of binary opposition.⁹⁴ However,

⁹³ [W. Prynne], *A Looking-Glasse for all Lordly Prelates* (1636), 40–2; J. Bastwick, *The Answer of Iohn Bastwick, Doctor of Phisicke, to the Exceptions made against his Letany* (Holland?, 1637), 26. The scriptural reference by Prynne to Numbers 23:23 was commonly invoked as proof of the inviolability of the godly to witchcraft and other assaults of the Devil: see below, 110. Interestingly, Prynne made the wholly unsubstantiated claim that the first Henrician statute against witchcraft arose as a result of the exposure of Wolsey’s sorcery: [Prynne], *A Looking-Glasse*, 41. The quotation from Bastwick occurs in a passage remarkable for its political conservatism and adherence to the concept of the divine nature of Charles I’s kingship.

⁹⁴ I have outlined these arguments elsewhere in my ‘“Saints or Sorcerers”: Quakerism, Demonology and the Decline of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century England’, in Barry, Hester and Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, 161–3. For the application of inversionary reasoning and binary thinking, as elaborated by Stuart Clark, to an understanding of the internal dynamics of

by the 1630s the conflation of the new doctrinal and ceremonial innovations in the Church of England with Catholic beliefs and practices ensured that it was no longer possible to isolate and externalize those 'pathogens' that threatened the welfare of the nation as differences emerged from *within* the body politic as to the precise nature of who or what constituted the diabolical 'other'.⁹⁵

From the perspective of the puritan dissident, the hallmarks of papist witchcraft were all too evident in the new Arminian directives relating to liturgical practices. As early as 1628 the Durham puritan Peter Smart (c.1569–c.1652) preached against their introduction, castigating them, among other things, for smacking of magic and witchcraft. In particular Smart objected to the fixation of John Cosin (1595–1672), a fellow prebendary and the man chiefly responsible for introducing the new practices to Durham Cathedral, with facing eastwards, with his back to the congregation, a habit he compared to that of necromancers and sorcerers 'who turne their faces to the East, when they act their enchantments'. Symptomatic of the Arminian denigration of the importance of preaching, Smart concluded that 'it little becomes Christians to follow Witches, and Coniurers, on their superstitious and divelish devotions, by preferring East before West'.⁹⁶ The Laudian campaign to promote the beautification of churches and its associated emphasis upon ritual at the expense of preaching also fostered, not surprisingly, a backlash against many other aspects of the Anglican liturgy, many of which had long drawn the disapproval of the puritan clergy and laity. As the opposition to Arminianization grew, the fury of the puritans increasingly focused on objects such as the Book of Common Prayer, which for many represented the quintessence of an unreformed Church. It was also increasingly compared to a conjuror's manual. As early as 1599

anti-popery and puritanism, see P. Lake, 'Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice', in R. Cust and A. Hughes (eds), *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603–1642* (London and New York, 1989), 73–5; P. Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke, 1988), 146–8. Clark's original article on 'Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft', *Past and Present*, 87 (1980), 98–127 now constitutes, in revised and expanded form, chs 4 and 5 of his *Thinking With Demons*.

⁹⁵ It was equally the case, of course, that the demonization of the religious and political opposition to Charles' regime and policies, discussed above, contributed to this novel state of affairs. The term 'pathogens' is taken from the work of Jonathan Gil Harris which focuses on the early modern English preoccupation with archetypal 'outsiders' such as the Catholic, witch, and Jew, and has much of interest to say about the relationship between these three categories of 'other': J. G. Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1998).

⁹⁶ In addition, Smart compared the Arminians with the Galatians, who were 'foolishly bewitched' into believing similar 'vaine superstitions' [Galatians 3:1]: P. Smart, *The Vanitie & Downe-Fall of Superstitious Popish Ceremonies: Or, A Sermon Preached in the Cathedral Church of Durham* [27 July 1628] (Edinburgh, 1628), 6, 19, 27–8, 37. Smart was subsequently censured and deprived of his prebend while Cosin emerged as a champion of Laudianism for which he received due reward. In 1639 he was made vice chancellor of Cambridge University and on Christmas Eve in the same year he engaged in some apocalyptic musings of his own when he condemned Socinians and Puritan Antichrists as the 'Locusts ascending out of the bottomlesse pit, the very form of the beast, [and] hellhounds'. The taint of magic clearly clung to Cosin for the rest of his life. In 1656, when a parliamentary committee discussed the publication of a magical book by the occult philosopher Robert Turner, one MP commented that it reminded him of another work published by Dr Cosin, 'wherein he had appointed prayers for such and such hours': BL, Harleian MS 7019, fo. 63r; J. T. Rutt (ed.), *Diary of Thomas Burton*, 4 vols (London, 1828), i, 80, 305–7.

a man from Kent had been prosecuted for stating that the litany laid down in the Book was ‘a charm’.⁹⁷ Just over forty years later, it was routinely described in this way and treated accordingly. The puritan minister Nathaniel Angeloe, for example, was alleged to have said of the Book of Common Prayer in the early 1640s that it was ‘nothing but a piece of conjuration’, and he added for good measure that ‘the bishops were Popish rogues [who] deserved nothing but hanging... that the... King was a Papist in his heart and the Queen was a whore and her children were Germaine’s [i.e. Jermyn’s] bastards’. In a similar vein, the puritan martyr Henry Burton (1578–1648) was reported to have preached at Westminster in the summer of 1641 against idols, amongst which he included that ‘abominable idoll, the Common Prayer Booke [that] was framed & composed by the Devill & practised & mayntayned by the Devil’s Impes or Instruments’.⁹⁸ Those who heard such words may well have acted upon them. William Harvey of Earls Colne in Essex, for example, confessed that he had ‘taken the Common prayer Booke out of his parish Church on a Sunday morning and throwne the same into a pond of water & the next day finding it swimming took the same and tearing it in pieces threw parte of it into the fire and burnt it’. Harvey, surely, was consciously imitating the kind of informal tests reserved for witches who were routinely ‘swum’ to confirm their guilt. Others were equally convinced of the diabolic and false nature of the Book. At about the same time, a woman at Lime House refused to believe a demonic spirit that was said to haunt a house there when it answered in the affirmative to a question concerning the legitimacy of the service book.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ A. Hussey (ed.), ‘Visitations of the Archdeacon of Canterbury’, *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 26 (1904), 22. The culprit was one Richard Sharpe of St John’s Thanet. Sharpe may well have come under the spell of the radical puritan lawyer William Claybrooke, who lived in the parish, and was earlier active in the subscription crisis in which he singled out the Prayer Book for attack and denounced archbishop Whitgift as ‘pope of Lambeth’. He was later visited by the Presbyterian Thomas Cartwright, but was ultimately driven into separatism after leading an unsuccessful campaign to rid the village of its religiously conservative vicar: P. Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent 1500–1640* (Hassocks, 1977), 174–5. Immediately prior to the prosecution of Sharpe, two men from the parish were hauled before the same church court for consulting with one Mother Chambers, a witch. One of the men, Alexander Violet, was a serial offender and a fully paid-up member of the reprobate: Hussey, ‘Visitations’, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24. The various prosecutions at this time are almost certainly indicative of acute religious division and turmoil in the parish.

⁹⁸ CSPD, 1660–1685, 7–8; CUL, MS Mm.I.45, fo. 38. The sermon preached by Burton was later published, though the phrases reported by the auditor cited above do not appear in this sanitized version: H. Burton, *Englands Bondage and Hope of Deliverance. A Sermon Preached Before the Honourable House of Parliament* [St Margaret’s, Westminster, 20 June 1641] (London, 1641).

⁹⁹ LRRO, DE 221/13/2/21; CUL, MS Mm.I.45, 39. The former case is referred to, but misreferenced, by Judith Maltby and John Walter. Both, however, note the parallel between the ritual punishment of the book and the treatment reserved for suspected witches, Walter commenting on its probity as ‘an appropriate way of removing the source of pollution’. Similar thinking would later inform the behaviour of those who assisted Hopkins and Stearne in East Anglia: see J. Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1998), 92; J. Walter, ‘Abolishing Superstition with Sedition? The Politics of Popular Iconoclasm in England, 1640–1642’, *Past and Present*, 183 (2004), 92. Others to note the connection between acts of iconoclasm and the punishments reserved for witches include Diarmaid MacCulloch, who cites the case of a statue of the Virgin Mary that was ducked as a witch at Riga in 1524: D. MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe’s House Divided 1490–1700* (London, 2003), 155. See also note 158, this chapter.

Other 'popish' vestiges of the Anglican liturgy that attracted the demonological sensitivities of puritan critics included the practice of churching. In 1641 the puritan minister Lewes Hughes (c.1570–c.1646) expatiated at length on a somewhat convoluted comparison of the ritual of churching, as laid down in the Book of Common Prayer, with the actions and words accredited to witches in their failure to enunciate correctly the Lord's Prayer. Written in the form of a dialogue between a gentleman and a minister, Hughes, in the guise of the latter, was finally able to convince his interlocutor by citing a specific case, that of the bewitchment of the puritan maid Mary Glover at the hands of Mother Jackson in London forty years earlier. Hughes had been an eye witness to the events he described, including the failure of the suspected witch to repeat the Lord's Prayer, though what possessed him to include these details in the 1641 edition of his work, and neglect it in two earlier impressions published in the previous year, is open to conjecture. The fact, however, that the 1641 edition was addressed to Parliament in the expectation of an imminent reform of 'abuses' such as churching may well have emboldened Hughes to further emphasize the demonic nature of the Anglican liturgy.¹⁰⁰ By the end of 1641, many of the principal architects of the Arminian and liturgical reforms were under arrest and awaiting trial. Some, like Archbishop Laud, were openly derided as necromancers and conjurors. In 1640, a man from Eastry in Kent who was involved in the destruction of the recently erected altar rails there described the local minister and loyal Arminian Thomas Blechynden as seeking to the 'conjuror' Laud in an attempt to discover the culprit.¹⁰¹ The actions of others such as Bishop Wren were compared to the antics of demoniacs. Looking back from the vantage point of 1645, the Scottish Presbyterian Robert Baillie (1602–1662) echoed the views of many when he claimed that Laudianism, 'that new Canterburian-Protestantisme which the other day so much bewitched the Court and Country', was in reality 'nothing but masked Popery . . . a high path-royall way to Rome, a Schoole of Idolatry, Heresie, Treachery, and merciless bloodshed'.¹⁰²

In addition to the parallels that were drawn between specific aspects of Laudian and Roman Catholic worship, Charles I's reputation among his critics further

¹⁰⁰ L. Hughes, *Certaine Grievances, or The Errours of the Service-Book; Plainely Layd Open, With Some Reasons Wherefore It may and ought to be Removed; Well Worthy the Serious Consideration of the Right Honorable and High Court of Parliament* (London, 1641), 9–10, 12–15. This work first appeared in 1640 and went through numerous subsequent impressions and emendations. For Hughes, who had spent much of the interim period in 'exile' in Bermuda, see *ODNB*, sub Hughes, Lewis. Hughes' adversaries, not surprisingly, replied in kind, accusing him of acting the witch and emulating Simon Magus, for like him Hughes 'would be thought some great one too, for your profound knowledge in what passeth between the Devill and witches, of which you have so often told us': Anon., *M. Lewes Hughes His Dialogue Answered . . . Whereunto is Annexed a Satisfactory Discourse concerning Episcopacy and the Surplisse* (London, 1641), 28–9, 31.

¹⁰¹ *CSPD*, 1640, 486. The destruction of the rails was followed by a great storm which local puritans ascribed to the 'conjuror' Laud. For further attempts to denigrate Laud as a purveyor of the black arts, see Anon., *A Plot Lately Discovered for the Taking of the Tower, by Negromancie, for the Deliverance of the Archbishop* (London, 1641).

¹⁰² Anon., *Wren's Anatomy. Discovering His Notorious Pranks, and Shameful Wickednesse* (London, 1641), 12; R. Baillie, *Errours and Induration, Are the Great Sins and the Great Judgements of the Time. Preached in a Sermon Before the Right Honourable House of Peers* [30 July 1645] (London, 1645), A2v.

suffered as a result of the presence at court of a significant Catholic entourage surrounding his wife, Henrietta Maria. In time, such associations would drag down the monarchy too, and lead some to suggest that the King himself might not be above suspicion when it came to promoting diabolism and witchcraft. Prior to the 1640s such speculation was rare, but it is discernible in coded form. Again, Old Testament models of kingship provided plenty of ammunition. Saul, as we shall see, was later to prove a popular choice. Less obvious, but perhaps more pertinent given the circumstances outlined above, was the case of Manasseh, who was said to have erected altars to pagan gods, as well as using witchcraft and consorting with witches and wizards (2 Chronicles 33:3–6). At least three examples survive of puritan preachers expounding on this text in the 1630s in Essex alone. In March of that year, the militant Edward Sparrowhawk explicitly compared Charles to Manasseh in a sermon at Coggeshall that was designed to implicate the King in the controversial and much hated policy of railing altars then being imposed upon the country.¹⁰³ Later the same year, his colleague Enoch Grey repeated the slur, claiming that ‘the sinnes of the King (as sinnes of wicked Manasses) are now laid upon the Kingdome’.¹⁰⁴ Adam Harsnett (d.1639), puritan minister at Cranham, took a slightly different approach when he pointed out, in a clear bout of wishful thinking, that a repentant Manasseh was ultimately reconciled to God and restored to his kingdom.¹⁰⁵ As was so often the case, these sermons were frequently reprised for new audiences. Grey, for example, would appear to have repeated the slander in December 1641 while preaching on the imminent downfall of Antichrist and the whore of Babylon at Grace Church, London, and he returned to the theme of Manasseh’s apostasy in 1649, while writing in justification of the regicide.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ TNA, SP 16/350/54 I. Sparrowhawk had first come to Laud’s notice in 1633, when as curate and lecturer at St Mary Woolchurch, London, he was suspended for preaching against the practice of bowing at the name of Jesus; LPL, MS 943, 262. For Sparrowhawk’s disillusionment with the religious authorities in 1637, and his citation of Manasseh, see Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 242. William Hunt also refers to this episode in his study of politics and religion in pre-civil war Essex, naming one of his chapters ‘The Sins of Manasseh’ (235–78). I have not, however, been able to verify his claim that the puritan minister Thomas Barnes invoked Manasseh as early as 1623: W. Hunt, *The Puritan Moment: The Coming of Revolution in an English County* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1983), 177.

¹⁰⁴ ERO, T/B 211/1, fos 18, 28; LPL, MS 3391, fos 39, 41. Grey would appear to have been an itinerant preacher in the years between 1637 and 1641, having been suspended by Laud as early as 1633 for extolling ‘unsound doctrine’: LPL, MS 943, 255. In the latter year, he petitioned against the treatment afforded to him at Maldon in Essex and Sandwich in Kent in this period: LPL, MS 3391, fo. 103. On the basis of his pronounced interest in witchcraft and connections with Essex (he was serving as minister at Wickham St Paul in 1644), he was probably the same as the Mr Grey who intervened in 1646 to seek a pardon for one of the witches tried and found guilty at Chelmsford in 1645: see below, 134 and n.

¹⁰⁵ A. Harsnett, *Gods Summons unto a General Repentance* (London, 1640), 62–3. For Harsnett’s puritan inclinations and associations, see *ODNB*, sub Harsnett, Adam.

¹⁰⁶ LPL, MS 3391, fos 74, 76; E. Grey, *Vox Coeli, Containing Maxims of Pious Policy* (London, 1649), 25. In the dedication to Sir Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell, Grey alludes to ‘the most desperate Paroxysm of our great Body Politick . . . far spent by the king’s evil’, while in the body of the work he defends the execution of the King and the creation of the republic on the grounds that it was ‘better one should perish then a Nation’; *v; 25. It seems likely that the anonymous author of a witchcraft tract in 1649 also had Charles I and the civil wars in mind, when he cited the example of Manasses as a witch, who, after using his enchantments, ‘not long after . . . made Jerusalem to run down with blood from one end to another’: [B. Misodaimon], *The Divels Delusions or, A Faithful*

Similar allusions can be found throughout the 1640s. The Presbyterian minister Edward Bowles (1613–1662) and the parliamentary soldier William Whitfield both compared Charles to Manasseh, albeit obliquely, in treatises written in 1643 and 1645 respectively, while the Leveller leader John Lilburne (d.1657) felt little compunction in repeating the accusation in 1646 when he pre-empted Enoch Grey by calling for atonement for the blood spilled by the King.¹⁰⁷

During the course of the 1640s, as the country became embroiled in a bitter civil war, spokesmen for the parliamentary cause, like their royalist counterparts, grew ever more eager to ascribe demonological motives to the actions of their opponents. The trend is most readily discernible in the series of fast sermons preached before Parliament in this period. At Westminster, puritan ministers took the opportunity provided by a national stage to persuade, cajole, or coerce MPs and peers to believe in the righteousness of their cause and the inevitability of the war's outcome. At the same time, they sought to provide explanations for, as well as solutions to, the various problems facing the country. Unsurprisingly perhaps, given the millennial expectations then gripping the political nation, these were frequently couched in the language of the demonic. This is evident, for example, in the frequency with which the King and his advisers were compared to a range of biblical archetypes, including the apostate Saul, who went to the witch of Endor for advice, pharaoh and his court magicians Jannes and Jambres, and evil counsellors such as Balaam and Elymas the Sorcerer.¹⁰⁸ Gone were the inhibitions that characterized the restrained and coded critiques of earlier decades.¹⁰⁹ Typical of the genre was that preached by Edmund Staunton (1600–1671) in April 1644. Convinced that England stood on the brink of the long-awaited millennium and final coming of Christ, Staunton, echoing the demonological assumptions of Revelation, asserted that Parliament's enemies would utilize every weapon in their armoury, including witchcraft, sorcery, and magic, in order to defeat the godly:

The enemy relies much upon this art [sorcery] and skill in the intoxication of Princes and great men with a cup of fornication, thereby holding them up in their ingagements

Relation of John Palmer and Elizabeth Knott Two Notorious Witches Lately Condemned at . . . St Albans (London, 1649), 3.

¹⁰⁷ E. Bowles, *Plaine English: or, A Discourse Concerning the Accommodation, the Armie, the Association* ([London], 1643), 4–5 [Saul and the witch of Endor], 18 [Manasseh]; W. W[hitfield], *Idolaters Ruine and Englands Triumph; or, The Meditations of a Maimed Souldier* (London, 1645), 4–5; J. Lilburne, *The Iust Mans Iustification* (London, 1646), 10.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, J. Caryl, *Heaven and Earth Embracing: Or, God and Man Approaching* [28 January 1646] (London, 1646), 38–9 [Saul and witch of Endor]; P. Sterry, *The Commings Forth of Christ in the Power of His Death* [1 November 1649] (London, 1650), 7 [Saul 'a Prince of Disobedience, Witchcrafts, Idolatries'], 40–1 [Jannes and Jambres]; H. Palmer, *The Duty and Honour of Church-Restorers* [30 September 1646] (London, 1646), 57 [Anglican ministers compared to Jannes and Jambres]; T. Wilson, *Jerichoes Down-Fall* [28 September 1642] (London, 1643), 31, 33–4 [Elymas and Pharaoh's sorcerers].

¹⁰⁹ For a particularly good example of the care and trepidation which preachers customarily undertook when invoking the name and image of Saul, see J. Rawlinson, *Vivat Rex. A Sermon Preached at Pauls Crosse* [24 March 1614/15] (Oxford, 1619), 2. Rawlinson needed to be especially sensitive in this instance because of the mild rebuke which he inserted in the heart of his sermon to the issue of burdensome subsidies: *ibid.*, 14–16.

against Israel: this was the magic sleight of Egypt, to blow up and keep alive the flame of Pharaoh's indignation, though he in himselfe had many inclinations to let Israel goe . . . these wily Sorcerers held Pharaoh captive, and by his meanes, Israel . . . [T]here is yet one sinne more they much leane upon, Magick and Witchcraft; Balaam must be hired to curse Israel: and if Witches and Wizards have any power in their black art, *now is a time for them to drive a full trade*.¹¹⁰

Staunton was not alone among the Westminster preachers in accusing the royalists of employing witches and witchcraft in the armed struggle against Parliament. In 1644 Francis Woodcock suggested that those who deserted the parliamentary cause for Oxford were 'bewitched', the victims of a conspiracy of 'diabolical spirits' at the court of Charles I, that included Cavaliers, Catholics, and supporters of the Spanish faction. A year later Thomas Coleman (c.1598–1647) went one stage further when he compared those Irish Catholics who fought for the King with witches and sorcerers.¹¹¹ In so doing, he was undoubtedly playing on widespread fears, consistently peddled by parliamentarian apologists and propagandists, linking Catholics, especially Irish rebels, with witchcraft. In the early 1640s, rumours abounded in England of the misdeeds of Irish rebels, including their propensity to engage in the black arts. Thomas Ady, the witchcraft sceptic, later claimed that 'it is still common practice among the Papists to carry Charms about them (to make them shot-free) when they goe to Warre, as . . . hath been found by experience in the late Irish Warres [when] many of the poor Idolatrous Irish Rebels [were] found slain with charms in their pockets, composed by the Popish clergy, the Witches of these latter times'.¹¹² If the women slaughtered at Naseby following the royalist defeat there in June 1645 were indeed massacred because the parliamentarian soldiers feared they were Irish witches, it probably owed much to the widespread dissemination of the prejudices aired by men like Coleman and Ady.¹¹³

There can be little doubt, as I suggest in what follows, that such incidents, and the beliefs that underpinned them, encouraged men like Hopkins and Stearne to suspect a fifth column of witches operating in East Anglia in the late 1640s. The

¹¹⁰ E. Staunton, *Rupes Israelis: The Rock of Israel. A Little Part of Its Glory Laid Forth in a Sermon* [14 April 1644] (London, 1644), 10–11 [quote; my emphasis], 16 [Balaam]. For the story of Balaam the magician, whose diabolical powers proved ineffectual against the Jews, see Numbers, chs 22 and 23.

¹¹¹ F. Woodcock, *Christ's Warning-piece: Giving Notice to Every One to Watch, and Keep their Garments* [30 October 1644] (London, 1644), 18; T. Coleman, *Hopes Deferred and Dashed* [30 July 1645] (London, 1645), 32.

¹¹² T. Ady, *A Candle in the Dark Shewing the Divine Cause of the Distractions of the Whole Nation of England and of the Christian World* (London, 1655), 57. This comment, combined with the fact that the physician Ady was granted Irish land in County Tipperary in the 1650s, raises the possibility that he may have served in the army's medical services there prior to the publication of this work. I discuss Ady's life and thought more fully in Chapter 4.

¹¹³ For a recent attempt to resurrect the thesis of the Naseby witches, see M. Stoye, 'The Road to Farndon Field: Explaining the Massacre of the Royalist Women at Naseby', *English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), 895–923. Accusations and counter-accusations of witchcraft featured prominently in the early stages of the Irish Rebellion, while Protestant apologists made much of an incident at Portadown in October 1641 when a vengeful ghost reappeared following the massacre by drowning of numerous Protestants in the town: R. Gillespie, *Devoted People: Belief and Religion in Early Modern Ireland* (Manchester and New York, 1997), 54, 110–11.

preachers of the Westminster fast sermons, however, also provided a strategy or form of counter-magic to defeat the Satanic hordes that enlisted for service in the royal cause. Inherent in the concept of the fast itself, as others have noted, was the notion that it provided, through its exorcistic properties, a remedy for the 'witchcraft' unleashed by the civil and religious commotions of the 1640s. David Sabean, for example, has compared the Protestant practice of fasting and prayer to 'a kind of collective rite of exorcism', an interpretation that clearly informed the thinking of many of those who preached before Parliament in this period.¹¹⁴ The image of England in the early 1640s as a 'nation possessed' thus encouraged ministers like Henry Wilkinson (1610–1675) to call for whole legions of devils to be cast out of the kingdom. Citing Mark 9:25–26, he informed Parliament that 'many a drunken, prophane, formall, superstitious, idolatrous, ceremoniall devill, many a foule spirit is ready to be dispossessed on regard they have rent and torne our Kingdome so miserably'.¹¹⁵ In the same year, 1643, Anthony Burges (d.1664) specifically identified the Laudian Church as a fit object for exorcism and Parliament as the instrument of torment for those 'proud Church-Governours' who, like the wicked devils in the New Testament, were no longer able to 'opresse and rage as they used to doe'.¹¹⁶ Similar claims were repeated in numerous sermons preached before Parliament in these years, all of them aimed at stiffening the resolve of MPs and peers in what many now saw as a cosmic and eschatological struggle between the forces of good and evil.¹¹⁷ In such a conflict it was only natural that puritan preachers should magnify the role to be played by godly ministers and magistrates, and that they should do so by emphasizing the charismatic powers inherent in those offices which included the exorcizing of demons and eradication of witches. In most cases, they did so by expounding, as we have seen, on those metaphorical devils who challenged the peace of the godly. Occasionally, however, the boundary between metaphor and reality became blurred. In 1646, for example, the moderate Independent Joseph Caryl (1602–1673) went to great pains to point out that the extraordinary power of Christ to subdue the Devil was, in this current age, delegated to his ministers. While much of his sermon was devoted to a metaphorical

¹¹⁴ D. Sabean, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1984), 69 [see also 91]. William Hunt has likened the fast to a form of 'clerical sorcery', as well as suggesting that official orders calling for fasts might be interpreted by dissidents as a sign that the 'official magic' of the Church was failing and that 'the government had lost . . . the mandate of heaven': Hunt, *Puritan Moment*, 198–9.

¹¹⁵ H. Wilkinson, *Babylons Ruine, Jerusalems Rising* [25 October 1643] (London, 1643), 12–13. The theme of a land possessed is well captured in the work of the puritan John Goodwin (1594–1665), who, on the eve of the battle of Edgehill in 1642, exclaimed: 'What shall we think of that Legion of Devils . . . who now possesse the Land, and after the manner of Devils indeed, seek all to rent and teare it in pieces [and] to turne the Lawes and present frame of Government upside down': J. Goodwin, *Anti-Cavalierisme, or, Truth Pleading as well the Necessity, as the Lawfulness of this Present War* (London, 1642), 2.

¹¹⁶ A. Burges, *The Difficulty of, and the Encouragements to a Reformation* [27 September 1643] (London, 1643), 21–2 [citing Matthew 8:29].

¹¹⁷ For further examples, see W. Gouge, *The Saints Support* [29 June 1642] (London, 1642), 16; C. Herle, *A Payre of Compasses for Church and State* [30 November 1642] (London, 1642), 2; Palmer, *Duty and Honour of Church-Restorers*, 6.

exposition of the exorcistic powers wielded by godly ministers, he was nonetheless careful to add that while ‘the dispossession of evil spirits was rare’, it was feasible.¹¹⁸ In 1645, John Lightfoot (1602–1675) extended such powers to the godly magistrate, the divinely sanctioned nature of whose office was evident in his ability to ‘hang a witch’. Like Caryl, he too was committed to the idea that the ability to restrain the Devil and his servants, delegated from Christ, was inherent in the ministry of God’s word, which by preaching and prayer was able ‘to cast the devill out’.¹¹⁹ Lightfoot in all probability was speaking metaphorically when he invoked such images of possession and exorcism, but others were more ambiguous in trumpeting the real power of charismatic ministers to use their supernatural gifts to drive out demons. Memories of earlier celebrated puritan dispossessions were, as we have seen, resurrected in the early 1640s, and at least one parliamentary preacher felt sufficiently emboldened to declare in 1646 that the age of miracles had not ceased and that God continued to work such wonders through his chosen ones.¹²⁰ Central to such puritan thaumaturgy was the value placed on preaching the scriptures and the curative power inherent in words and prayer. MPs were reminded of these virtues when in 1644 Peter Smith intoned that ‘[i]t were infinite to recount what mightie things have been accomplished by prayer, things to mans judgement impossible: What diseases, seeming incurable, have been healed by prayer? what dead raised? what devils cast out?’¹²¹ The transformative power of words in the puritan psyche may also have extended to the quasi-magical attributes often ascribed to the Solemn League and Covenant. Some puritan preachers in the 1640s were widely reported as telling their

¹¹⁸ J. Caryl, *Joy Out-Joyed: or Joy in Overcoming Evil Spirits and Evil Men, Overcome by Better Joy* [19 February 1646] (London, 1646), 5–6. Preaching from Luke 10:20 on the occasion of the parliamentary victory at Chester, Caryl likened the relief of that city to a form of dispossession: *ibid.*, 21.

¹¹⁹ J. Lightfoot, *A Sermon Preached Before the Honourable House of Commons* [26 August 1645] (London, 1645), 20–2. In contrast to many of his colleagues, Lightfoot was not a chiliast, arguing that the millennium had long since passed. The rest of the sermon is chiefly of interest for the light which it sheds on the evolving puritan conception of the Devil, whose age he gives as ‘5573 yeares . . . within one moneth or thereabouts’: *ibid.*, 22.

¹²⁰ T. Case, *A Model of True Thankfulnesse* [19 February 1646] (London, 1646), 3. Case, like Caryl, was preaching on the occasion of the surrender of Chester. The idea of the cessation of miracles has been widely accepted as axiomatic in Protestant thought. Recently, however, the status of such thinking has been challenged by, among others, Alex Walsham, who has argued convincingly for a blurring of the boundaries between miracles and other ‘extraordinary providences’ of God: Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, 229–32. I would suggest that the 1640s and 1650s witnessed an intensification of this process, due in no small part to the kind of preaching discussed here.

¹²¹ P. Smith, *A Sermon Preached Before the Honorable House of Commons at their Monthly Fast* [29 May 1644] (London, 1644), 25; cf. W. Spurstowe, *Englands Patterne and Duty in its Monthly Fasts* [21 July 1643] (London, 1643), 18. In his study of pre-civil war puritanism in Essex, Tom Webster has noted the centrality of exorcistic practices and preaching to puritan ministers, commenting that there was ‘no clear division between exorcism and the more extreme cases that formed the normal pastoral calling of the Puritan ministry as spiritual physicians’. He goes on to compare the ways in which cases of alleged possession became conflated with other forms of spiritual anxiety and were resolved in similar ways, most notably by recourse to the methodology of casuistry and ‘cases of conscience’: Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 51–2. I discuss these insights further, in relation to the nonconformist predilection for witchcraft and related ideas after 1660, in Chapter 5.

congregations that those who stubbornly refused to take the Covenant were doomed to eternal damnation.¹²²

Exorcism through preaching, prayer, and fasting thus offered one defence against the Devil. But witch lore offered a second, complementary method, of turning the tables on the old enemy of mankind, for it was a commonplace of Protestant demonology that witches only held sway over those who feared or humoured them, and were powerless to act against those who, in the words of George Gipps (d.1654) preaching before Parliament in 1645, 'neglect and defie them'.¹²³ A favourite text of many parliamentarian preachers keen to reassure waverers or 'lukewarm Laodicians' was Numbers 23:23: 'Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there divination against Israel.' The identification of civil war England with ancient Israel strengthened the underlying message that those who remained faithful to the Lord and true religion would assuredly overcome their enemies, including those who Balaam-like resorted to magic and witchcraft.¹²⁴ Of course, the two principal defences against the sorcery of Parliament's enemies—preaching and faith—were inextricably linked, the former acting as the guarantor of the latter. The final coming of Christ, enshrined in the preaching of his word, would thus inaugurate what Henry Hall termed the 'unwitching' of the world, an event prefigured in the New Testament by events in Samaria where the 'Inchantments and Sorceries of Simon the Conjuror' were discovered to be wholly ineffective in the face of 'a more potent and effectual charm', the preaching of the gospel.¹²⁵ Hall's optimism was mirrored in a sermon preached a year later by Peter Sterry (1613–1672), in which he too linked the disenchantment of the world to the preaching of Christ's word, a process begun at the coming of Christ and now to be completed in this new age of the 'divine spirit':

The Spirit should reade this Lecture upon the world; how, since the fall, the whole frame, all appearances of things, had been one great enchantment raised and maintained upon the spirits of men, by the father of lies, the Prince of darknesse; to hide their eyes from the sight of God. But how Jesus Christ had by his death cast down that

¹²² See, for example, Bodl., Clarendon MS 31, fos 30r-v.

¹²³ G. Gipps, *A Sermon Preached... to the Honourable House of Commons* [27 November 1644] (London, 1645), 15.

¹²⁴ See, for example, Staunton, *Rupes Israelis*, 10–11; H. Wilkinson, *Miranda, Stupenda. Or, The Wonderfull and Astonishing Mercies which the Lord hath Wrought for England... Presented in a Sermon Preached Before the Honourable House of Commons* [21 July 1646] (London, 1646), 1–3. Wilkinson, preaching shortly after the surrender of Oxford, chose as his set text Numbers 23:23. He makes the predictable inference that Parliament's victory in the civil war was a just and godly one, as demonstrated, among other things, by the fact that 'all the sorceries, witchcraft and stratagems, contrived and carried on by the wit and malice, and power of hell against the Church of God, shall prove vaine and successlesse': *ibid.*, 2. Wilkinson, too, would appear to have believed that the age of miracles was not yet ended, as suggested by a fascinating commentary in this work on the comet of 1572: *ibid.*, 11.

¹²⁵ H. Hall, *Heaven Ravished: Or A Glorious Prize, Attchieved by an Heroicall Enterprize* [29 May 1644] (London, 1644), 15. Note, too, Hall's warning to the godly to avoid the 'bewitching entreaties' and 'pleasing charmes' of friends and others, as well as his denunciation of 'neutralizing temporizers': 'This cause of God is of that Nature, that if a man do not appear in it, and gather with Christ, he scattereth from him, there being no middle condition possible in which a man can close or side with any other than the devill, who joynes not with Christ': *ibid.*, 49, 56–7.

old Magician from his Throne and Power; and now the whole enchantment, the fashion or show of this world was dissolving and vanishing, till it should appeare no more.¹²⁶

The fast sermons preached at Westminster by puritan divines, like their counterparts given at Oxford by loyal royalist clerics, were thus infused with the language of witchcraft. As such, they typified the demonological frame of mind that increasingly gripped the whole nation, regardless of individual religious and political orientation, during the course of the 1640s. Growing fears and expectations of an apocalyptic duel between the forces of good and evil were nourished by a wide range of media that included sermons, short pamphlets, populist broadsides, and cheap newspapers. All helped disperse the message far and wide. Most sermons, of course, were not published, but those that were suggest that the obsession with witchcraft found at Westminster was replicated elsewhere, both in the capital and the provinces. Saul remained a common target of puritan polemic, but as with the parliamentary fast sermons, it was the figure of the witch as royal counsellor that attracted the greatest attention. The Old Testament provided bountiful material. In addition to the usual suspects such as pharaoh's sorcerers and Balaam, new figures of hate such as Haman, who used witchcraft against Ahaseurus, were invoked in order to discredit the royalist cause.¹²⁷ Similar inferences also found their way into political debate, including parliamentary propaganda, in this period, and were subsequently cited to explain sudden changes of allegiance or shifts in policy. The militant royalist war party, for example, was tainted in the eyes of 'moderates' by the suggestion that it had 'bewitched' or misadvised the King, an accusation that gathered momentum following the publication of various pamphlets linking one of its leaders, Prince Rupert, with witchcraft in the form of the prince's pet 'familiar', Boy.¹²⁸ Again, it would be easy to dismiss such works as mere propaganda, the

¹²⁶ P. Sterry, *The Spirits Conviction of Sinne. Opened in a Sermon before the Honorable House of Commons* [26 November 1645] (London, 1645), 8. Sterry, a leading Independent, mystical Platonist, and supporter of Cromwell, would later direct his demonological ire toward the diabolical formality and ceremonialism of Scottish Presbyterianism and Roman Catholicism which he compared to the ministry of Simon Magus and the 'Ghost of Judaisme raised from the dead by that Witch of Endor': P. Sterry, *England's Deliverance from the Northern Presbytery, Compared with its Deliverance from the Roman Papacy: Or A Thanksgiving Sermon . . . Before the Supreme Authority of this Nation, the High Court of Parliament* [5 November 1651] (London, 1652), 12–13, 15.

¹²⁷ C. Herle, *Ahab's Fall by his Prophets Flatteries: Being the Substance of Three Sermons, Upon 1 Kings. 22.22* [a compend of three sermons preached before the House of Commons, the Lord Mayor, and aldermen of London and at Westminster Abbey, n.d.] (London, 1644), 29 [Saul and witch of Endor]; J. Shaw, *The Three Kingdomes Case: Or, Their Sad Calamities, Together with Their Causes and Cure* [fast sermon, Kingston upon Hull, n.d.] (London, 1646), 6 [Balaam]; J. Bond, *The State's Stability* [Exeter, before deputy lieutenant and militia, n.d.] (London, 1643), 18 [Haman]. Bond infers Haman's patronage of witches, 'that he might find a way to bewitch the king', as a result of his resort to casting of lots: Esther 3:7.

¹²⁸ Anon., *Observations upon Prince Rupert's White Dog, called Boy* (London, 1642). This may have been the work of disenchanted royalists or moderate parliamentarians. For a further contribution to this 'debate', permeated throughout with the language of popular demonology, see Anon., *The Parliament's Unspotted Bitch: In Answer to Prince Roberts Dog Called Boy, and His Malignant She-Monkey* (London, 1643). For discussion of the significance of this episode within the wider context of the religious and political conflicts of the 1630s and 1640s, see M. Stoye, *The Black Legend of Prince Rupert's Dog: Witchcraft and Propaganda during the English Civil War* (Exeter, 2011).

product of parliamentary fantasists, if it were not for the fact that similar thinking also permeated political debate within Parliament. Denzil Holles, for example, invoked the spectre of witchcraft following the attempt by the King to arrest him in January 1642. Six months later, as the nation prepared for war, the parliamentary leader John Pym (1584–1643), faced with the defection of the renegade Kent MP Sir Edward Dering (1598–1644), ascribed the latter's attempt to instigate a petition from the grand jury of Kent in favour of episcopacy and the Prayer Book to witchcraft. Citing Ovid, Pym told the house that 'instead of inquiring upon the statute of witchcraft and conjuration, he useth his conjurations and enchantments upon them, to conjure them to secrecy'.¹²⁹ Nor was the use of such language limited to the political elite at Westminster. In 1647, for example, a royalist woman from Exeter abused her parliamentary neighbour with a variety of choice invective, including the slur of 'witch'.¹³⁰

In the light of the ubiquity of such language it is hardly surprising that acts of witchcraft were widely reported on the battlefields and sieges of the first civil war. Some achieved wide publicity, such as the infamous 'witch of Newbury', who was the subject of numerous newspaper reports.¹³¹ Others were confined to the diaries and journals of those who fought in the war and are thus less easily dismissed as fictive propaganda. An interesting example of the latter can be found in the diary of Edward Drake, a Dorset parliamentarian present at the siege of Lyme Regis in 1644. In June of that year, he recorded a conversation with two royalist defectors who claimed that 'the enemy did almost despair of ever taking the town, and therefore resolved to burn it if they could, and for this purpose they had procured a witch, who had undertaken to fire the . . . houses; and . . . to sink the Lord Admiral's squadron of ships, by devilish art and practice'. The governor did indeed order the roofs of certain thatched houses to be dismantled, though not, Drake confidently affirmed, because he went in fear of the witch, but rather because he was 'a man of greater faith and more knowledge' than most who was worried by the practical dangers posed by fire.¹³² The common soldiery of both sides were perhaps less steadfast in their faith.

¹²⁹ D. Holles, *Master Hollis His Speech in Parliament* (London, 1642), 1; J. Forster, *Lives of Eminent British Statesmen: John Pym and John Hampden* (London, 1837), 272. For Dering's 'deepening conservatism' between 1640 and 1642, see D. Hirst, 'The Defection of Sir Edward Dering, 1640–1641', *Historical Journal*, 15 (1972), 193–208.

¹³⁰ DRO, ECA C/1/64, fo. 102v. A range of depositions made against the accused, Mary Cholwill, at the city's January sessions indicate that she was vehemently antagonistic to those fellow citizens who had supported the parliamentary cause in the city. Among other things, she was accused of berating parish officials ('every Rogue was putt in Office nowe') and of having said at the time of the parliamentary siege of the city that she would prefer the city to surrender to the Turks than Sir Thomas Fairfax, and that she would fire the same rather than let it fall into the hands of Parliament. She was probably well connected. At the Restoration, she petitioned the city fathers seeking compensation for moneys owed to her late husband, William, who had formerly served as sergeant at mace to the corporation: DRO, ECA 10, fo. 170r.

¹³¹ See, for example, *Mercurius Aulicus*, 560–1 [6 October 1643].

¹³² G. Roberts, *The History and Antiquities of the Borough of Lyme Regis and Charmouth* (London, 1834), 93. Roberts records that Drake's diary, entitled 'An account of the most remarkable passages that happened at the streight siege of Lyme Regis by prince Maurice . . . 1644', was discovered in 1786 at White Lackington House, near Ilminster, the residence of the prominent parliamentarian and puritan Speke family during the civil war. Unfortunately, the original does not appear to have survived.

Parliamentarian troops, no doubt influenced by stories of the demonic protection afforded to Prince Rupert, were alleged to have declared that a royalist scout encountered at Sorton Down in 1643 was no less than a devil as he was inviolable to bullets. Conversely, in an account that has clear echoes of the incident at Lyme, it was widely rumoured among royalist soldiers that the puritan minister Robert Balsom (d.1647) was a ‘witch’ and that he was suspected of using his diabolical skills to assist the besieged parliamentary forces at Wardour Castle in 1644.¹³³

The fear of witchcraft exhibited by those enlisted to fight almost certainly reflected a general preoccupation at this time with miracles and wonders, generated by the apocalyptic preaching of both sides. Contemporary pamphlet and newspaper reports of extreme weather conditions, providential apparitions in the sky, monstrous births, and stone-throwing poltergeists vied for the reader’s attention.¹³⁴ They were also, invariably, inflected with partisan meaning. The author, for example, of a short pamphlet describing the birth of a headless monster at Kirkham in Lancashire linked the phenomenon with the Catholic and royalist dominance of the county, as well as its proclivity in producing witches.¹³⁵ Stories such as these, easily dismissed as propaganda, gained wide credence precisely because they tallied so closely with what ordinary people were being told in their local pulpits. The mood is neatly captured by the Presbyterian William Jenkyn (1613–1685), preaching before the House of Lords in 1646, when he observed that ‘[t]here are many that to finde out wonders, are faint to leave their English soyl, and think nothing stupendious, but what, either they go to see in other Lands, or from thence is brought home to them. But we may spare our pains, we need not travell into Africa to behold a monster; no, England afoords one far more monstrous’.¹³⁶

¹³³ R. Baker, *A Chronicle of the Kings of England* (London, 1660), 450; S. Clarke, *A Generall Martyrologie Containing a Collection of all the Greatest Persecutions which have Befallen the Church of Christ... Whereunto are added Two and Twenty Lives of English Modern Divines* (London, 1660), ii, 213. Balsom, who was captured at Wardour, narrowly escaped death. He subsequently took up pastoral duties at Berwick, where he played an important role in offering spiritual comfort to the bewitched daughter of a local gentleman: [M. Moore], *Wonderfull News from the North, or, A True Relation of the Sad and Grievous Torments, Inflicted upon the Bodies of Three Children of Mr George Muschamp... by Witch-craft* (London, 1650), 3, 4.

¹³⁴ See, for example, Anon., *A Signe from Heaven: Or a Fearefull and Terrible Noise Heard in the Ayre at Alborow* [i.e. Aldeburgh, Suffolk, 4 August 1642] (London, 1642) [thunderstorm]; Anon., *Strange and Fearfull Newes from Plaisto* (London, 1645) [poltergeist]; Anon., *Sad Newes from the Eastern Parts* (London, 1646) [apparitions in the sky as harbingers of new divisions in Church and state].

¹³⁵ Anon., *A Declaration of a Strange and Wonderfull Monster... Attested by Mr Fleetwood, Minister of the Said Parish* (London, 1646), 4. The ‘popish’ mother was alleged to have declared that she would prefer to give birth to a headless child than one with a ‘roundhead’.

¹³⁶ W. Jenkyn, *Reformation’s Remora; or, Temporizing the Stop of Building the Temple* [25 February 1646] (London, 1646), 8. Jenkyn, one of the leading figures in promoting the Presbyterian cause in London in the 1640s and 1650s, was lamenting the slide into religious anarchy and Parliament’s failure to erect a reformed and united Church in the wake of the defeat of Arminianism and the bishops. Similar motives would appear to have underlain the claim of Thomas Hodges (c.1600–1672) in 1647 when he asked his political masters: ‘Shall famous England become an Amsterdam of Mixtures, an Island of Monsters?’: T. Hodges, *The Growth and Spreading of Haeresie. Set Forth in a Sermon Before the Honourable House of Commons* [10 March 1647] (London, 1647), 46. In condemning the ‘spiritual vertigo’ that had befallen the people, Hodges employed the demonological language usually reserved for royalist and Anglican apologists and applied it instead to those ‘bewitched’ by religious novelty: *ibid.*, 1, 13.

THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ROOTS
OF WITCH-HUNTING IN EAST ANGLIA:
THE HOPKINS TRIALS, 1645–47

Among the many ‘monsters’ upon whom Jenkyn and his compatriots might have fixed in order to prove their point were those witches tried in Essex and Suffolk in the previous year. The so-called Hopkins trials have, until recently, received an unsatisfactory hearing at the bar of history. The execution of around 200 men and women in East Anglia for the ‘imaginary’ crime of witchcraft between 1645 and 1647 has traditionally been viewed with an understandable, though not always helpful, mixture of horror and shame. The tendency of many commentators to marginalize the trials, and to depict them as exceptional, remote, even un-English, has encouraged historians to explain *away*, rather than explain, the actual meaning and significance which they held for contemporaries. Two lines of argument have facilitated this approach. First, it has become all too convenient to lay the burden of blame for the trials upon the machinations of a single individual, Matthew Hopkins (d.1647), who, more often than not, is depicted as a greedy, cunning, malevolent, misogynistic charlatan.¹³⁷ A second and more subtle approach has attempted to shift responsibility for the trials away from individuals, and to suggest instead that the East Anglian hunt was a by-product of the collapse of the normal machinery of local and central government, particularly in relation to the oversight of justice. Jim Sharpe, for example, has argued that the ‘witch craze’ flourished in East Anglia partly ‘because some normal restraints, notably the presence of assize judges, were lacking in the key early stages’, and partly because local magistrates were ‘preoccupied with the problems of keeping the war effort going’ and so ‘allowed local pressures for witch-hunting to get out of hand’.¹³⁸ Both these explanations, however, minimize the extent to which a genuine fear of witchcraft now dominated the thinking of a whole generation of English men and women of all social, religious, and political backgrounds as a result of the strains and anxieties

¹³⁷ Most influentially in the deeply flawed biography of Hopkins to be found in R. Deacon, *Matthew Hopkins: Witch Finder General* (London, 1976), 66–7. Deacon, among other things, was given to inventing fictitious sources in order to bolster the scant surviving records of Hopkins’ life: Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 283, 334n. Unfortunately, many, such as the so-called ‘Tendring Hundred Witchcraft Papers’, continue to be cited by scholars working in the field of witchcraft studies: see, for example, D. Purkiss, *The English Civil War: A People’s History* (London, 2007), 382.

¹³⁸ Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, 140–1. Sharpe’s argument that the trials were largely a product of local factors that may have been halted but for the absence of strong central controls echoes the work of some European historians of witchcraft who have tended either to equate witch-hunting with provincial ‘superstition’ and ignorance (Briggs) or seen it as the product of local elites acting in defiance of central government (Dillinger): R. Briggs, *Communities of Belief: Cultural and Social Tensions in Early Modern France* (Oxford, 1989), 12–14; R. Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (London, 1996), 331–7; J. Dillinger, ‘Boese Leute’: *Hexenverfolgungen in Schwäbisch-Oesterreich und Kurtrier im Vergleich* (Trier, 1999). In reviewing the latter, Robert Walinski-Kiehl has sensibly cautioned against applying this model to the whole of early modern Germany, composed as it was of so many different types of polity: *Social History*, 25 (2000), 347 [346–8]. For the debate between witchcraft scholars on this issue, see note 45, this chapter.

generated by a decade of political and religious strife culminating in civil war and the disintegration of the body politic.

In what follows, I would like to suggest that the Hopkins trials were the product of exceptional circumstances, but that these did not relate primarily to the role of a single individual, nor to the breakdown of the normal machinery of justice. Instead, I argue here that what happened in East Anglia was the product of a unique combination of local factors that intersected with national concerns to create the ideal environment for witch-hunting. Two factors in particular were critical in this process. First, it is absolutely essential to acknowledge the extent to which the people of this region, above all others, had become politicized by the religious and political debates, characteristically couched in demonic terms, that took place in the decade or so before Hopkins appeared on the scene. Politicization by itself, however, cannot explain the whole process. After all, men and women in other parts of England were equally subject to such developments. What made the Hopkins trials a reality was a second factor contingent upon the fact that East Anglia was one of the few regions not to be directly affected by the military campaigns of the civil war. The absence of fighting and resulting devastation meant that local government and administration, far from collapsing in this region, continued to function and allowed local elites an opportunity to rebuild their communities, albeit according to a new set of precepts laid down by a consortium of godly preachers and god-fearing magistrates. The witch hunts in East Anglia, I shall argue, were not therefore a judicial aberration but rather should be seen as part of a concerted attempt by a coalition of local interest groups to construct a godly society purged of its various enemies, including witches, and reconstituted on sound biblical principles.

The religious and political preconditions that helped to create an atmosphere conducive to witch-hunting in East Anglia in the 1640s have been outlined by Malcolm Gaskill in his recent account of the Hopkins trials.¹³⁹ They are worth reconsidering here in a more systematic way in order to demonstrate how and why communities and individuals became obsessed with eradicating witches. In the earliest stages of this process, a significant minority of the population of this part of England found itself increasingly at odds with the government of Charles I over the introduction of a variety of 'innovations' in Church and state. They included a range of unpopular political, fiscal, and military initiatives, including ship money and war with the Scots, though the most profound opposition was reserved for the ceremonial and doctrinal innovations imposed on the Church by Archbishop Laud. These developments, of course, took place across the kingdom and were not specific to the eastern counties. It is arguable, however, that they were imposed on this region with greater vigour and intensity and produced a more violent reaction than in any other part of the nation. The principal villain here, in the eyes of local puritans, was undoubtedly Matthew Wren, who served as bishop of Norwich from 1636 until 1638, when he was translated to the neighbouring

¹³⁹ Gaskill, *Witchfinders*. Gaskill's study is an illuminating, detailed, and highly readable account of the Hopkins trials. In what follows, I hope to complement rather than critique his findings.

diocese of Ely. Wren was an indefatigable and zealous advocate of the Laudian innovations, whose energetic pursuit of conformity created an inevitable backlash in a region where puritanism had always attracted widespread support. As a result of Wren's endeavours, puritan ministers who refused to subscribe to the new directives were deprived of their livings, and many laity as well as clergy were driven into enforced exile, either in neighbouring Holland or New England. The latent hostility of those who remained rapidly found expression in the altered circumstances of the early 1640s, when conformists and other time-servers were hauled before parliamentary and local committees and were sequestered from their livings. Now the boot was firmly on the other foot as the puritans tightened their grip on the region, and instituted their own 'reforms' that were designed to lay the foundations for a new godly commonwealth. The imposition of the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643 was swiftly followed in some of the eastern counties by a remarkable bout of carefully orchestrated iconoclasm that in its intensity and thoroughness was unequalled anywhere else in the country. It is difficult to judge the impact of all these developments on the region as a whole, but there can be little doubt that by early 1645, the counties of eastern England, especially Suffolk, were rendered uniquely sensitive to a war on witches.

Before I look in detail at how these developments impacted on the witch-hunting communities of East Anglia in this period, some further comment on the local dimension of the trials is in order. While recent scholarly treatment of the Hopkins trials has, quite rightly, refocused attention away from Hopkins himself, there remains an underlying assumption that the trials which he and his close associates helped to instigate were to a large degree the product of a vacuum at the heart of local government in the region in the mid-1640s. Distracted by the war effort and forced to rely on the efforts of local JPs to enforce a semblance of order amid the growing chaos, it seems only natural to assume that local communities might fall prey to cunning, charismatic chancers like Hopkins, who proceeded to subvert customary legal procedures in the absence of any concerted opposition. Such an analysis, for example, would appear to underlie even Gaskill's otherwise excellent study of the Hopkins trials, and requires challenging, I believe, on a number of grounds.¹⁴⁰ In the first instance, the inference that centrally appointed assize judges were more likely to demonstrate scepticism in the face of accused witches or more likely to dispense 'impartial justice' than locally appointed magistrates is open to debate. Certainly, as far as many pre-civil war puritans were concerned, there was little that was impartial about the way in which some assize judges went about their business on behalf of the crown. In 1631, the puritan minister John Rous recorded in his diary that his eminent colleague Thomas Scott (d.1640), preaching at the assizes at Bury St Edmunds in 1631, used the occasion to condemn the 'corruptions of judges and others', as did one Mr Greene at Norwich in the same year, much to the fury of the presiding judge, Sir Francis Harvey (d.1632).¹⁴¹ Moreover, if Charles I's circuit judges did act to impose a

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 224–5; cf. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, 140–1.

¹⁴¹ See note 55, this chapter.

moratorium on prosecutions for witchcraft in the 1630s, the question arises as to whether official ‘scepticism’ of this kind was a product of their greater proficiency in applying the letter of the law or merely reflected the politically informed antipathy for witches exhibited by their royal master (as discussed above).

Also at stake here is the unspoken assumption that a chasm existed between centre and locality. While there are grounds to suspect that the years of Charles’ Personal Rule may have fostered such a divide, the predominant characteristic of the administration of law and government in pre-civil war England remained its reliance upon the integration and mutual dependence of local and central interests. Many of those local dignitaries, for instance, who, in the absence of the assizes, oversaw the administration of justice in East Anglia in the 1640s and were responsible, among other things, for orchestrating the trials of witches, were themselves figures of national prominence. Robert Rich, second earl of Warwick (1587–1658) and Sir Thomas Bowes (d.1676), as Jim Sharpe acknowledges, fell into this category, and while they may have lacked the kind of legal dexterity that came naturally to metropolitan judges, the same was certainly not true of some of their colleagues on the county and borough benches. Sir Harbottle Grimston, for example, who played such a vital role in the early stages of the Hopkins trials, and Miles Corbet (1595–1662), who dominated proceedings at Great Yarmouth in 1645–46, were both accomplished legal minds as much at home on the benches of the House of Commons as they were when officiating as recorders in their respective boroughs. The same is true of Robert Barnard (1601–1666), recorder for Huntingdon and its MP in the Short Parliament, who was almost certainly responsible, through his servant John Davenport, for publishing the trial records of the Huntingdonshire witches in 1646.¹⁴² Men such as these, moreover, were no doubt highly partial in their judgements. Like their puritan colleagues in the Church, they were committed to restoring godly order to a body politic that had, in Grimston’s colourful phrase, become polluted by men like Archbishop Laud, whom he derided in Parliament as that ‘stye of all Pestilent filth that hath infected the State and Government of the Church and Common-wealth’.¹⁴³ In order to achieve this end, they were therefore more than happy to instigate and oversee the prosecution of all those whom they saw as an obstacle to such goals, a list that included political adversaries, recalcitrant clergy, and religious apostates such as witches.

Much has also been made of the methods used to secure convictions in the Hopkins trials, and the willingness of inexperienced JPs and others to admit lower standards of evidence. While it is tempting, once again, to see this as a by-product

¹⁴² John Davenport, author of *The Witches of Huntingdon* (London, 1646), dutifully acknowledged his debt to Barnard and his family, with whom he lived and served for twenty-two years, in his will of 1663 in which he bequeathed a piece of inscribed commemorative plate to his old master. Barnard insisted in his own will that it be preserved as a family heirloom: TNA, PROB 11/313, fos 20v–21r [24 December 1663; proved 28 January 1663/4]; PROB 11/320, fos 162r–164v [5 December 1665; proved 15 May 1666].

¹⁴³ [Sir H. Grimston], *Mr. Grymston’s Speech in Parliament upon the Accusation and Impeachment of William Laud* (London, 1641), 2.

of the amateurish provincialism of many magistrates, it probably makes more sense to view the way in which these trials were conducted as an example of a reformed legal coda that imbibed theocratic concepts of justice in accordance with puritan sensibilities. We have already seen how in an earlier period, some puritan magistrates and educated laymen were willing to incorporate and legitimate a range of tests (swimming, pricking, scratching, etc.) in order to establish the guilt or innocence of witches, many of which appealed to a wide cross-section of the population. The reinstatement of such methods in the 1640s is thus best seen not as a symptom of the lowering of judicial standards, but rather as an attempt to impose a different set of standards—populist and reformed—upon due legal process. It is easy to see how such developments might be interpreted as an attack on ‘sound judicial principles’, but it would be a mistake, I feel, to conclude that the notions of justice favoured by the witch hunters and their collaborators in the villages and towns of East Anglia represented little more than mob justice or ‘random assertions of self will’.¹⁴⁴ As John Walter has eloquently demonstrated in his micro-study of the Stour Valley riots of 1642, the ‘mob’ or generality of the people, often poor and illiterate, nonetheless possessed a strong sense of right and wrong which informed many of their actions.¹⁴⁵ In the absence of official legal action, the people often acted in defence of communal notions of justice, as in the riots, when they targeted the homes of Catholics or attacked and pulled down the hated altar rails. One of the most intriguing acts of popular justice took place in Suffolk in the summer of 1640 when large groups of soldiers, pressed locally for the war in Scotland, mutinied and set up their own tribunals in which they punished offenders for crimes such as fornication and witchcraft.¹⁴⁶ The incident is memorable for a variety of reasons. Above all, it gives the lie to the idea that the breakdown of law and order and popular fear of witches post-dated the outbreak of the civil war. As early as September 1640, one Essex man was heard to declare that ‘there were no laws now’.¹⁴⁷ If such views were shared by the troops in Suffolk, then their actions in forming ‘commissaries courts’ and executing summary justice on offenders is probably best seen as an attempt by the soldiery to fill what they

¹⁴⁴ Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 225.

¹⁴⁵ Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*.

¹⁴⁶ *CSPD*, 1640, 290–1, 336, 346. Soldiers would appear to have figured prominently in actions against witches in later years. At Warminster, Wiltshire, in 1646, an accused witch alleged that two years previously two soldiers had assisted a neighbour in breaking into her house, where she was bitten, pinched, and scratched. Troops also figured prominently in the early stages of the mass trials for witchcraft in Kent in 1652, when ‘certain Souldiers of Colonell Humfreys Regiment’ hauled one of the chief suspects before a local JP: B. H. Cunningham (ed.), *Records of the County of Wilts Being Extracts from the Quarter Sessions Great Rolls of the Seventeenth Century* (Devizes, 1932), 155–6; Anon., *A Prodigious & Tragickall History of the Arraignment, Tryall, Confession, and Condemnation of Six Witches at Maidstone in Kent* (London, 1652), 4. In a neat reversal of this process, two Northamptonshire men were recruited into the parliamentary army in 1644 after they had been found guilty of murdering a suspected witch by ducking: *Lords Journal*, vol. 7 [1644–5], 78.

¹⁴⁷ *CSPD*, 1640–1641, 126. For another example of this kind of popular thinking in Norfolk during the early years of the civil war, see Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 224. It would be hugely informative to know more about popular conceptions of the law in this period and the extent to which these views were commonplace.

perceived as an unwanted and growing legal vacuum. The object of the soldiers' attention, moreover, strongly suggests a deep attachment to a moral code in which certain categories of sinful offenders were singled out for punishment. The fact that they rounded on a local witch is particularly intriguing since it suggests a failure on the part of 'normal justice', and by extension the government of Charles I, to punish those evildoers whom they saw as posing a threat to the peace and wellbeing of the commonwealth.

Events such as these, which often involved collusion across the social spectrum, strongly suggest that for many in pre-civil war East Anglia, as across the nation as a whole, the normal structures of government in Church and state were widely perceived as broken and in need of repair. More often than not, contemporaries, employing the commonplace idea of the political nation as a body politic, described their world as disordered and sick.¹⁴⁸ Accordingly, medical metaphors, offering both diagnosis and cure of the nation's ills, permeated political discourse. The Essex gentleman and MP Sir Harbottle Grimston, who would later play such a conspicuous role in the first of the Hopkins trials, encapsulated this mood when he informed Parliament in the spring of 1641 that 'it is impossible to cure an ulcerous body unless you first cleanse the veins and purge the body from these obstructions and pestilential humours that surcharge nature', adding for good measure that '[t]he diseases and distempers that are now in our body are grown to that height that they pray for and importune a cure'. The answer, as his Suffolk counterpart Sir Simonds D'Ewes (1602–1650) pointed out to the same audience, lay in 'the settling of the matter of religion', which he affirmed 'will be as a salve to cure all our sores'.¹⁴⁹ As the crisis deepened, however, and the country lurched toward civil war, ever more desperate measures were prescribed for the nation's ills. Invasive surgery, including phlebotomy and purgation, now became the order of the day. Sermons and political pamphlets hammered away at this theme, producing a general climate of anxiety and fear in which ever more radical interventionist measures were put forward and debated. In areas such as East Anglia, where the obstacles to direct action were minimal, local men and women, many politicized by the events of the previous decade, now began to act for themselves in order to 'exorcize' the region of its demons and to provide a 'healing balm' to its people. Under the circumstances, it is hardly surprising then that so many of its inhabitants offered a warm welcome to men like Matthew Hopkins, whose mission to rid the country of witches should, I suggest, be seen as a form of purgative medicine or healing rather than the work of a woman-hating psychopath intent on profiting from the delusions of his neighbours.

¹⁴⁸ I hope to return to the subject of the body politic, its appeal to puritan and non-puritan, and continued resonance as an explanatory system of political ideas long after the execution of Charles I, in forthcoming publications.

¹⁴⁹ Cited in D. Cressy, *England on Edge: Crisis and Revolution 1640–1642* (Oxford, 2006), 31, 182. The tendency of opposition MPs to describe the crisis of the early 1640s within the idiom of learned medicine is noted elsewhere by Cressy (see especially *ibid.*, 10–12, 30–4). However, I cannot, for obvious reasons, subscribe to Cressy's view that 'the Devil was rarely mentioned, and witchcraft was almost entirely absent' from contemporary discourse in the period from 1640 to 1642: *ibid.*, 30.

Hopkins, according to this reading of events, is best seen as an exorcistic healer rather than as a fraud or madman, whose mission to 'purge' the towns and villages of East Anglia of witches was motivated by a desire to heal the wounds of the body politic and to lay the ground for, and legitimate, a new religious and political dispensation based on a strict, puritanical moral code. At the same time, it is also necessary to acknowledge that such a cause would always possess broad appeal in a region long noted for its puritan piety and bitterly divided by recent events. Hopkins could never have achieved what he did by acting alone. He was welcomed throughout much of the region because others shared his hopes and fears, securing significant support among those politicized parish and urban elites for whom the civil war constituted an opportunity for self-promotion as well as an occasion for introspection followed by action. The Hopkins episode should thus be seen as a natural by-product of these developments in which, in Malcolm Gaskill's summation, 'fear of the enemy without was experienced and expressed as fear of an enemy within' and witch-hunting itself was understood to be 'part of the war effort'.¹⁵⁰

While it might seem fanciful to depict Hopkins and his supporters as the seventeenth-century equivalent of Captain Mainwaring's Home Guard, contemporaries clearly perceived a close link between military victory in the civil war and events behind the lines.¹⁵¹ In a sermon preached at Belstead in Suffolk in the summer of 1647, Benjamin Hubbard (1608–1660), the minister of neighbouring Copdock, reviewed recent providential events on the home front, including the taking of the Covenant, the destruction of 'superstitious reliques', and the discovery and execution of witches, which he explicitly linked to the 'many glorious victories' obtained by the armies of Parliament on the battlefield.¹⁵² The two villages of Belstead and Copdock, both in close proximity to the godly centre of Ipswich, had been at the heart of the campaign, initiated by Hopkins and others, to root out and

¹⁵⁰ Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 169, 73.

¹⁵¹ For the uninitiated, Captain Mainwaring was the fictional leader of a troop of local Home Guard in the Second World War immortalized in the BBC comedy *Dad's Army*. Unlike Hopkins, he possessed little charisma but remained convinced that all his efforts, and those of his rather forlorn group of men, made a vital contribution to the defeat of Hitler. On a more serious note, William Dowsing, whose actions as an iconoclast prefigured the witch-hunting of Hopkins, clearly perceived his own efforts as a contribution to the war effort. In March 1643, in a letter addressed to the celebrated puritan divine Matthew Newcomen, he made an explicit connection between military success and iconoclasm in the reign of Edward VI. At the time, he held the office of provost marshal to the Eastern Association: J. Morrill, 'William Dowsing: the Bureaucratic Puritan', in Morrill, Slack and Woolf (eds), *Public Duty and Private Conscience*, 188.

¹⁵² B. Hubbard, *Sermo Secularis. Or, A Sermon to Bring to Remembrance the Dealings of Jehova with This Kingdom of England* (London, 1648), 19. The work was dedicated to Hubbard's patron, the parliamentarian Thomas Blossie (d.1662), high sheriff of Suffolk, and Nathaniel and Francis Bacon, two local puritan JPs. Hubbard had been appointed to the living in September 1647 on the death of Joseph Clifford. He was born into a godly family at Mendlesham, Suffolk, in 1608, and along with a number of his siblings emigrated to New England in 1633. There, he befriended the religious radical John Wheelwright and Governor John Winthrop. He returned to England in early 1645, probably with the intention of promoting his recent discoveries regarding longitude. These were published in 1656 as *Orthodoxal Navigation. Or, the Admirable and Excellent Art of Arithmetical Great Circle-Sailing* (London, 1656). For a brief account of Hubbard and his family, including his brother Samuel (b. 1610), an early convert to seventh day baptism in New England, see E. W. Day, *1000 Years of Hubbard History 866 to 1895* (New York and London, 1895), 50–5.

destroy witches. Visited by Hopkins, they were in many respects typical of the communities that helped propel the self-styled witchfinder general to prominence in the middle years of the 1640s. Both places had also been visited by the 'bureaucratic puritan' William Dowsing on the same day in January 1644, when their churches were purged of remaining idols.¹⁵³ The two parishes, moreover, had experienced years of religious unrest in the period immediately before the outbreak of war. Belstead, for example, had witnessed the suspension of its minister, Richard Raymond, by Wren in 1636.¹⁵⁴ Copdock, on the other hand, was a noted centre of recusancy and the focus of anti-Catholic rioting in 1642 when the house of the local gentleman Henry Foster was ransacked by a 'mob' from Ipswich that was convinced the Fosters were harbouring a secret army of popish fifth columnists.¹⁵⁵ The parish itself was wholly unreformed in puritan eyes. Prior to Dowsing's visit, its church contained a vast store of 'superstitious Pictures' as well as two crucifixes. Shortly after, its conservative rector William Aldus (d.1680) was sequestered for a variety of offences including drunkenness and support for the ceremonial innovations of Laud. It was almost certainly no coincidence that one of those who witnessed against Aldus in 1644 as a devotee of Common Prayer, Robert Hitchcock, was the following year one of the principal witnesses against four women in the village accused of witchcraft.¹⁵⁶

It is tempting to speculate that the discovery and prosecution of witches in divided communities like Copdock was not adventitious but rather part of an orchestrated campaign by those now responsible for law and order to focus popular anger on 'soft targets'. John Walter's account of the Stour Valley riots in 1642 is immensely helpful in this respect since he stresses how the authorities, both central and local, were faced with a delicate balancing act in seeking to encourage and appease popular fears about a resurgent Catholicism while at the same time ensuring the preservation of property and social order. There is little doubt, as Walter makes clear, that there was widespread concern in government circles that the riots might get out of hand. At the same time, the parliamentary leadership in the county was keen to make sure that nothing was done to jeopardize popular support for the war. In the event, few rioters were prosecuted and the unrest

¹⁵³ Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, 312–13; T. Cooper (ed.), *The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia during the English Civil War* (Woodbridge, 2001), 226–7 [nos 73–74].

¹⁵⁴ Bodl., Tanner MS 314, fos 122v, 144v–145r.

¹⁵⁵ H. Foley (ed.), *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, 6 vols (London, 1875–1880), ii, 450. The incident is discussed more fully in Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, 44, 51, where the author places these events within the context of a general populist assault on local Catholics in the Stour Valley region of Essex and Suffolk. For the recusancy of the Fosters, see NkRO, DN/VIS/5/3/4, under *Copdock* [1627]; Bodl., Tanner MS 314, fo. 125; M. A. E. Green (ed.), *Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding . . . 1643–1660*, 5 vols (London, 1889–1892), 1867.

¹⁵⁶ For Aldus, see C. Holmes (ed.), *The Suffolk Committees for Scandalous Ministers, 1644–1646* (Woodbridge, Suffolk Rec. Soc., 12, 1970), 66–7; *Wal. Rev.*, 325. Aldus' predecessor, Thomas Garthwaite (1578–1653), was also a Laudian conformist: see Bodl., Tanner MS 68, fos 218r, 244r. Hitchcock was one of the 'middling sort' in the village; in 1639 he was rated at a respectable 8s 4d for ship money: V. B. Redstone (ed.), *The Ship-Money Returns for the County of Suffolk, 1639–40* (Woodbridge, 1904), 208.

gradually petered out.¹⁵⁷ The anti-Catholic rioting in Essex and Suffolk in 1642 and 1643, hot on the heels of the widespread destruction of altar rails throughout this part of England, did, however, raise important issues as to how such actions, which were themselves partly 'licensed' by godly preaching and parliamentary pronouncements, might be contained and channelled by local ruling elites into constructive ends. As Walter makes clear, it was no longer possible to ignore the voice of the 'people' as 'the idea of an active citizenry, mobilised by the politics of anti-popery and popular Parliamentarianism', took hold, particularly in those areas closest to London.¹⁵⁸ Nor was it feasible to govern without popular support and consent. In communities throughout eastern England, parish elites (constables, churchwardens, and others) had become profoundly politicized from the 1630s onwards, when they were first required to implement a whole range of policies, many unpopular, designed to promote the financial, religious, and political goals of Stuart 'absolutism', and then, with the collapse of the regime, were expected to dismantle the same and replace them with a whole new series of reforms and initiatives. Through such actions, many no doubt felt empowered to act against old neighbouring enemies, but not always with the best interests of the property-owning classes in mind. The unstable 'revolutionary culture' produced by what David Cressy has described as a proto-public sphere in England in these years necessitated careful management, particularly in areas such as East Anglia, where, as I have suggested, the process of politicization was most advanced.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, it was probably for this reason that the local governors of this region were so eager to encourage, license, and assist the activities of men like Dowsing and Hopkins, whose actions were widely interpreted as cathartic 'acts of piety' rather than vandalism and wanton destruction. The official status granted to both men strongly suggests that local elites, initially at least, welcomed the uncontentious nature of such purges.¹⁶⁰ After 1643, 'mob' violence aimed at property, particularly that in the hands of wealthy recusants, ceased. At the same time, popular anti-Catholicism was increasingly channelled into the destruction of physical objects (idols) or diabolical apostates (witches), both of which were widely perceived as the vestiges of an unreformed, 'superstitious' and 'papistical' religious culture.

The association between anti-Catholicism and the Hopkins trials of the 1640s is well attested by close study of the geographical spread of witch-hunting in this period. The first suspects all originated in the remote socio-economic backwater of

¹⁵⁷ Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, esp. 54–5.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 287–8, 298–300; J. Walter, 'Popular Iconoclasm and the Politics of the Parish in Eastern England, 1640–1642', *Historical Journal*, 47 (2004), 289–90. For a good example of this process in action, see the comment of William Skinner, a young man from Latton in Essex, who in January 1641 gave as his reason for burning the parish's altar rails that 'theye gave great offence to his conscience, and that the placing of them was against Gods lawes and the King's as appeareth by the twentyeth chapter of Exodus, and about the twentyeth verse': cited in Walter, 'Abolishing Superstition', 113.

¹⁵⁹ Cressy, *England on Edge*, 322.

¹⁶⁰ For an excellent overview of the life and work of Dowsing, and his place in Suffolk society, see Morrill, 'William Dowsing: the Bureaucratic Puritan', 173–203. For a revised version, see J. Morrill, 'William Dowsing and the Administration of Iconoclasm in the Puritan Revolution', in Cooper (ed.), *Journal of William Dowsing*, 1–28.

the Tendring peninsula in Essex, an area dominated by the Catholic family of Lord Rivers.¹⁶¹ Surprisingly perhaps, the focus thereafter of local witch hunters such as Hopkins switched from Essex to Suffolk, and in so doing followed the path of those anti-Catholic rioters who in 1642 pursued the Countess Rivers to her family estates in the Stour Valley. It was here, in Suffolk, that the activities of Hopkins bore greatest fruit, a reflection in all probability of the fact that it had experienced the highest levels of politicization in the region since the 1630s. The contrast with Norfolk, for example, where Hopkins found little enthusiasm for witch-hunting outside the godly citadels of Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn and a narrow strip of land bordering Suffolk in the south, is particularly striking. Suffolk had not only borne the brunt of that tireless advocate of conformity, Bishop Wren, in the late 1630s, but it had also monopolized the energies of the indefatigable iconoclast William Dowsing (1596–1668), who largely ignored the northernmost part of the old diocese of Norwich.¹⁶² Moreover, in traversing Suffolk in search of more victims, Hopkins closely followed the route taken by Dowsing a year earlier, further suggesting a close link in the minds of those villagers who clamoured for the witchfinders' help between the eradication of idols and witches.¹⁶³ Suffolk was also, according to Gaskill and Walter, more sensitive to anti-Catholic rhetoric and

¹⁶¹ For a description of the Tendring hundred as 'thinly populated, economically backward, and politically conservative', see Hunt, *Puritan Moment*, 211. Hunt, who goes on to describe the politicization of the region in the late 1630s and early 1640s culminating in the anti-Catholic riots directed at the Rivers family, suggests that Essex puritans, fearful of instigating class war, channelled popular hostility 'toward that section of the upper class that clung to the old religion or displayed obtrusive loyalty to the Crown'. He concludes by inferring that such a process was 'akin to . . . witch-hunting, which revived tragically in Essex in the year of Naseby': *ibid.*, 309. Hunt's analysis of the Tendring riots of 1642 has been challenged by John Walter, who has argued that the attacks stemmed first and foremost from the anti-Catholic prejudices of the rioters rather than any displaced class antagonism: Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*.

¹⁶² Both Dr Boorman and Kenneth Shippis have concluded that a disproportionate amount of Bishop Wren's time was taken up with attempting to tame puritan obstinacy in the Suffolk half of his diocese: D. W. Boorman, 'The Administrative and Disciplinary Problems of the Church on the Eve of the Civil War in the Light of the Extant Records of the Dioceses of Norwich and Ely under Bishop Wren', B. Litt. thesis (Oxford, 1959), 83; Shippis, 'Lay Patronage', 150. Malcolm Gaskill, who refers to Dowsing as a man 'rather like Hopkins', has also noted the similarity between the itineraries of the two men: Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 24–5. This may not have been coincidental. With respect to iconoclasm in Norfolk, John Blatchly has stressed that it was very much focused on the southern parts of the county, mirroring the process of clerical sequestration and the location of witches. Walter meanwhile has noted the relative paucity of popular iconoclasm in Norfolk: J. Blatchly, 'In Search of Bells: Iconoclasm in Norfolk, 1644', in Cooper (ed.), *Journal of William Dowsing*, 115, 117; Walter, 'Popular Iconoclasm', 266.

¹⁶³ Idolatry and diabolism were firmly linked in the popular imagination, partly through biblical texts like 1 Samuel 15:23, but also because they were both understood to represent a species of spiritual apostasy. Witchcraft, hatred of Catholicism, and iconoclasm went hand in hand at Amsterdam in 1566 during the mass outbreak of image-breaking in the Low Countries known as the *beeldenstorm*: G. K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke, 2003), 144–5. The link between witchcraft and iconoclasm may have been encouraged in England by puritan preachers like George Burdett, who in 1634 was accused by the Court of High Commission of preaching against the use of images and pictures in worship. In the course of one of his diatribes he is alleged to have said that 'none in the world . . . would convince him that this or that picture may more resemble Jesus than Judas, or that image or that picture rather resembled the Virgin Mary than the Pythoness in the Acts or the Witch of Endor': *CSPD, 1634–1635*, 539. Burdett, who lectured at Great Yarmouth (later a major site of witch-hunting in 1645), eluded the sentence of the court by fleeing to New England: *ibid.*, 537–9. Seven years later, the godly layman George Salteren linked rebellious witchcraft, or spiritual

more prone to popular action against local recusants.¹⁶⁴ It was surely no coincidence then that six of the seven resident gentry Catholic families attacked by 'mobs' in Suffolk in 1642–43 lived in towns and parishes that two years later offered up witches to Hopkins and his associates.¹⁶⁵ At the same time, none of those accused in 1645, as far as one can establish, were Catholics or members of recusant households. It would appear then that the puritan gentry had indeed managed, in the intervening years, to redirect popular anger toward idols and witches and so protect their wealthy Catholic neighbours from much of the violence aimed at the propertied classes. Under such circumstances, support for men like Dowsing and Hopkins was far more likely to promote social, as well as religious and political, harmony, than an all-out assault on Catholic landowners, many of whom would be dispossessed or subjected to financial penalties under the legal procedures for compounding instituted by Parliament in 1643.¹⁶⁶

THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE HOPKINS TRIALS

Between 1645 and 1647, the series of witch trials that began at Chelmsford in the summer of 1645 and petered out in the east Midlands two years later would account for the lives of around 200 people. We know the names of many of the victims and their accusers, though the patchiness of surviving records makes it impossible to provide a definitive list. Nonetheless, those records that have survived provide a valuable sample upon which to construct a reasonable assessment as to the ideological roots of the witch hunts as well as providing helpful insights into the reasons for the demise of the trials. Approximately 105 communities from across seven counties (Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire) were known to have produced witches in this period.¹⁶⁷ Detailed study of these locations confirms the view that witch-hunting in East Anglia was primarily a product of deep-seated religious

apostasy, with the idolatrous worship of images by citing 1 Samuel 15:23: G. Salteren, *A Treatise Against Images and Pictures in Churches* (London, 1641), 2, 8.

¹⁶⁴ Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 80; Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, 60–3.

¹⁶⁵ Acton, Copdock, Haughley/Wetherden, Hintlesham, Lavenham, and Long Melford. The seventh, Gifford's Hall, though situated in the parish of Stoke by Neyland, where no witches were detected, was actually closer to the villages of Polstead and Shelley, which did harbour witches. Two further examples illustrating the link between gentry recusancy and witch-hunting in 1645 are suggested by the Suffolk parishes of Linstead and Yoxford. For detailed descriptions of these and all other communities visited by Hopkins and Stearne in 1645–47, as well as a listing of all accused witches, victims, and witnesses, see my 'Appendix to the Hopkins Trials', under county and town/village, accessible at <http://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/history/research/centres/medicalhistory/projects/earlymodernmedicine> (hereafter cited as 'Appendix to the Hopkins Trials').

¹⁶⁶ According to Henry Foster, the victim of anti-Catholic rioting at Copdock, the local squire and puritan patron Thomas Blossie was astonished at, and saddened by, the destruction wreaked by the crowd: Foley, *Records of the Society of Jesus*, ii, 450; cf. the leading role played by Sir Harbottle Grimston in overseeing the restoration of the Rivers' estates in Tendring and pacifying the surrounding neighbourhood: Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, 52–3, 57. As a moderate Presbyterian, Grimston's concern for social order would appear to have over-ridden his deep-seated anti-Catholicism.

¹⁶⁷ For details, see 'Appendix to the Hopkins Trials'.

and political tensions, which in some cases extended back for more than a decade. Moreover, there is a clear correlation between the intensity of witch-hunting and the depth of such divisions.¹⁶⁸ While Suffolk, the most politicized of all the areas visited by Hopkins and his assistant, John Stearne (d.1670), may have provided exceptional evidence of this trend, it was equally apparent throughout other parts of East Anglia that offered up witches in this period. The fenland parishes in and around the Isle of Ely were particularly prone to religious and political conflict in the years immediately before the civil war, a situation exacerbated by the various contemporary schemes to drain and enclose the fens as well as the promotion of Wren from the diocese of Norfolk to Ely in 1638. The area around Cambridge, moreover, had been subjected to the officious scrutiny of the iconoclast William Dowsing, thus replicating in many ways the situation in neighbouring Suffolk. In short, there is little reason to dissent from Malcolm Gaskill's pithy observation that 'where iconoclasts and sequestrators went, witchfinders were bound to follow'.¹⁶⁹ If anything, my own evaluation of the evidence from these communities suggests that such factors require additional emphasis if we are to understand fully how and why the witch trials associated with Hopkins took hold with such force in this part of England in the middle years of the 1640s.

This is apparent, for example, both in relation to the puritanical impetus for witch-hunting in Essex and Suffolk in 1645, as well as with regard to the progress and demise of this process in 1646 and 1647. Gaskill, for example, in firmly ascribing the origin of the first trials in Essex to the anti-Catholic fears of local puritans, may have underestimated the extent to which those who supported Hopkins' campaign in the Tendring hundred, either as witnesses or victims of witchcraft, were motivated by a particular vision of a reformed, godly society. Presbyterianism was undoubtedly the most important unifying factor underpinning the early stages of the witch hunt in Essex. In addition to the widely acknowledged role played by the two examining magistrates, Sir Harbottle Grimston and Sir Thomas Bowes, both committed Presbyterians, less well noted but of equal importance was the involvement of men of slightly lesser social stature who were equally dedicated to the Presbyterian vision of a well-ordered, godly commonwealth purged of moral and spiritual delinquents. Four of those who witnessed against the Tendring witches would later represent their respective communities as lay elders in the embryonic Presbyterian system of classes established in Essex after the civil war.¹⁷⁰ There, they were joined by at least three (and possibly four)

¹⁶⁸ While this is not surprising in the case of large corporate boroughs such as Aldeburgh, Ipswich, and Great Yarmouth, it is particularly noteworthy in the case of smaller towns and villages such as Bramford, Framlingham, Glemham, and Halesworth.

¹⁶⁹ Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 183. It should be stressed, however, that neither Dowsing nor his associates would appear to have visited the Fenland parishes that later produced witches, partly, in all probability, because many of these churches had been purged of their idolatrous accessories in earlier bouts of official iconoclasm: R. Walker, 'William Dowsing in Cambridgeshire', in Cooper (ed.), *Journal of William Dowsing*, 46.

¹⁷⁰ John Alderton (Great Holland), Philip Daniel (Little Clacton), George Francis (Lawford), and Robert Tayler (Manningtree); see 'Appendix to the Hopkins Trials'. In addition, one of the witnesses

clergymen, who were also prominent in prosecuting witches in 1645.¹⁷¹ It is also worth pointing out that in two of the Essex parishes that lay outside the main area of witch-hunting in 1645—Leigh and Wivenhoe—Presbyterianism was enthusiastically promoted by the local lord of the manor (Robert, earl of Warwick at the former) and minister (Robert Cawton at the latter). Much discussion has centred on the vexed issue of Hopkins' own religious beliefs, and those of his companion John Stearne, in promoting the witch trials. While the latter's advanced puritanism is evident in his later commitment to upholding the sanctity of the sabbath, Hopkins' personal commitment to the Presbyterian cause looks increasingly probable in the light of the recent discovery that his widowed mother had married the aged puritan minister of Mistley, Thomas Witham (d.1644), sometime after 1635.¹⁷² Further evidence based on local parish records also suggests that Hopkins was part of a pre-civil war puritan network, centred on Manningtree, which included the iconoclast Dowsing. If so, then it becomes increasingly likely that Hopkins' itinerary, which closely followed the route taken by Dowsing in 1644, may owe something to the influence of his former godly neighbour.¹⁷³

Puritanism, then, almost certainly provided the early inspiration for the witch hunts in Essex, a pattern repeated in Suffolk, where puritan ministers and laymen were often the driving force behind local prosecutions.¹⁷⁴ As a result, in both

at Leigh in Essex named Dreamer may well have been the same as, or related to, Richard Dreamer who served as lay elder at neighbouring Little Shoebury: *ibid.*, sub Leigh.

¹⁷¹ George Eatoney (St Osyth), John Eedes (Lawford), and Thomas Salter (sometimes spelled Slaughter, of Great Bromley, who witnessed at nearby Kirby le Soken). Edward Darrell, who was a witness alongside John Alderton at Great Holland, may in fact be Edward Dowell, recently installed as minister of the parish following the deprivation of the much loathed Laudian Edward Cherry: *ibid.*

¹⁷² TNA, SP 24/10, fos 102v–103r, 159r, 24/78; F. Timbers, 'Witches' Sect or Prayer Meeting?: Matthew Hopkins Revisited', *Women's History Review*, 17 (2008), 25–6. Evidence of Stearne's sabbatarianism dates from a case heard in the Court of Indemnity in 1651–52, where the former witchfinder alleged that he was maliciously prosecuted by a neighbour at Lawshall in Suffolk following his attempt to arrest the man for riding on the sabbath. One of the most notable aspects of this case was Stearne's admission of his dire poverty, and his request that the case be prosecuted by him '*in forma pauperis*'. If true, Stearne's financial embarrassment may give the lie to those who have suggested that he and Hopkins acted against witches primarily for monetary gain. Whatever the case, Stearne's litigious nature is not in doubt as attested by his frequent appearance in the county's quarter sessions records throughout the 1650s (though unfortunately without reference to details of individual cases): see ESKRO, B105/2/3, fos 30v, 38v, 39r, 45v, 89r; B105/2/4, fo. 29r.

¹⁷³ One William Dowsing buried his wife and baptized his daughter on the same day at Lawford, less than a mile outside Manningtree, 10 May 1640; ERO, D/P/347/1/1. Conclusive proof that this was the iconoclast is evident from a handwritten note in one of his books (now in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC), where he writes that he read the book on 6 and 7 June 1640, that is 'a month want 2 day after my wives death': Morrill, 'William Dowsing: The Bureaucratic Puritan', 181 n. 57. In all likelihood, then, Dowsing was resident at Lawford at the time of the first witch trial there in 1641. It is also highly probable that he formed part of the puritan nexus centred on Hopkins' stepfather and rector of Mistley, Thomas Witham. One of Dowsing's closest friends, the godly clothier Bezaliel Angier of Dedham, had married Witham's daughter Anne in 1630: *ibid.*, 177–8; ERO, D/P/343/1/1 [marriages, 23 June 1630].

¹⁷⁴ For Suffolk witch-hunting parishes with puritan ministers: Bacton (John Marleton), Dunwich (William Browne and Hugh Driver), Ipswich (Owen Reeve), Westleton (John Swayne), and Wickham Skeith (Edward Willan), see 'Appendix to the Hopkins Trials'. For numerous examples of the role of godly parishioners and local office holders engaged in witch-hunting in Suffolk: Aldeburgh (Capt. Thomas Johnson), Bramford (John Curtis, William Stiles), Copdock/Flowton (Thomas Bull),

counties the campaign to eradicate witches often became conflated with the war against two other sets of apostates—royalists and religious radicals. Accusations of witchcraft were levelled at various men and women in Suffolk who were widely suspected of assisting the royalist war effort and impeding the parliamentary cause.¹⁷⁵ In similar fashion, royalist clergy, on occasion, became the object of the witchfinders' attention, most notably in the case of John Lowes of Brandeston. Elsewhere, as at Great Yarmouth, the close associates of sequestered Arminians and loyalists found themselves accused of witchcraft in what looks like a deliberate attempt by the puritan authorities to demonize their former tormentors and purge the town of spiritual pollutants.¹⁷⁶ More often than not, however, it was probably the fear of resurgent religious unorthodoxy that was primarily responsible for generating a climate of fear and spiritual anxiety among Presbyterians, and in the process heightened suspicions among many local activists that the godly communities of the Eastern Association were increasingly threatened by a diabolical conspiracy of witches and sectaries. The link between witchcraft and religious radicalism and heresy was well established by the time of the English civil wars.¹⁷⁷ It undoubtedly received a boost, however, from the events of the 1640s, when puritan preachers repeatedly equated the beliefs and practices of the newly

Dunwich (Thomas Spatchet), Framlingham (Thomas Fisher, John Sheldrake), Ipswich St Clements (William Bull Jnr), Ipswich St Peters (Peter Cole), Lavenham (Henry Coppinger), Playford (William Welles), Stowmarket (John Hayward and William Manning), and Westleton (Robert Hacon), see *ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ See, for example, *ibid.* under Creting, Glemham, Halesworth, and Mendham. It is also possible that the suspected male witch named King of Acton, Suffolk, was a royalist: *ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ The example of Great Yarmouth centres on the relationship between the prominent royalist and loyal supporter of Bishop Wren, Matthew Brooks, and his tenant Matthew Prime or Prince. The latter was twice prosecuted, unsuccessfully on both occasions, by the Yarmouth magistrates for practising white witchcraft. His supporters, among them loyalist clergymen such as Thomas Cheshire, mocked the puritan authorities, especially the town's recorder Miles Corbet, for their failure to appreciate that Prince was nothing other than a harmless astrologer; see 'Appendix to the Hopkins Trials', sub Great Yarmouth. It is possible that Prince inherited the medical and astrological practice of an earlier Yarmouth practitioner Jeffrey Neve (1579–1653), who served as a prominent spokesman for an anti-puritan lobby in the corporation in the late 1620s. He also possessed connections at court, lobbied hard for corporate reform and a new charter, but was ultimately unsuccessful in undermining the puritan clique that dominated urban politics in the borough. On quitting the town, he went to study medicine in the Low Countries, returned to London, but lost everything, including a flourishing medical practice, through his active support for the King in the 1640s: see J. K. Gruenfelder, 'Jeffrey Neve, Charles I and Great Yarmouth', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 40 (1988), 155–63; R. Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics: Charles I and Great Yarmouth', *Historical Journal*, 35 (1992), 9–11; *ODNB*, sub Le Neve, Jeffrey. A further link between Prince, Brooks, and Neve is suggested by the fact that Neve's son Robert, a physician, acquired a testimonial of medical proficiency from Brooks sometime before the latter's death in 1658: Guildhall Lib., London, MS 10,116, box 1, under date 1662.

¹⁷⁷ For an early example, see A. Walsham, '“Frantick Hackett”: Prophecy, Sorcery, Insanity and the Elizabethan Puritan Movement', *Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), 27–66. Edward Wightman, the last man in England to be burned for heresy in 1612, was earlier a prominent supporter of the inspired prophet and demoniac Thomas Darling of Burton-on-Trent, Wightman's home town: M. Gibson, *Possession, Puritanism and Print: Darrell, Harsnett, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Exorcism Controversy* (London, 2006), 56–63. Both cases have been cited as further evidence of the way in which the godly were able to accommodate learned ideas (in this case about possession and biblical exegesis) with popular culture: I. Atherton and D. Como, 'The Burning of Edward Wightman: Puritanism, Prelacy and the Politics of Heresy in Early Modern England', *English Historical Review*, 120 (2005), 1215–50.

emerging sects with those of devil-worshipping witches. Typical of this reaction was the sermon preached by the Presbyterian Richard Byfield (1598–1664) at Kingston in Surrey in February 1645 when he compared the activities of witches with those of libertines and Anabaptists, who frequently ‘delude simple mindes with glosings of some speciall care of them, about some point of truth pretended, as witches do the eyes of the body, that they thinke verily, they see that which they do not see, and do not see that which is absolutely necessary they should see and know’.¹⁷⁸

Later defenders of Calvinist orthodoxy such as the eminent Presbyterians Nathaniel Stephens (d.1678) and Thomas Hall (1610–1665) extended the comparison by stressing the fact that both witches and Baptists demanded that converts should reject their first baptism.¹⁷⁹ Occasionally, these concerns became fully conflated and led to actual accusations of witchcraft being levelled against those suspected of harbouring Baptist views. The Presbyterian Edward Willan (d.1691), who was responsible for taking the confessions of a number of witches at Wickham Skeith in Suffolk in 1645, claimed that one of the accused ‘professed anabaptisme’ and was ‘a runner after the new secks [sects]’.¹⁸⁰ Cases like these may well have induced fellow ministers in the county to preach on the joint threat posed to true religion by the activities of apostates such as witches and Baptists in this period. John Eachard, for example, who held the living of Darsham, situated in an area greatly affected by the witch trials, consistently compared and conflated the practices of witches with those of Baptists, who denied their original covenant with God. Interestingly, Eachard, himself a former radical, went on to deny the validity of the Baptists’ claim that they represented a true Church on the grounds

¹⁷⁸ R. Byfield, *Temple Defilers Defiled, Wherein a True Visible Church of Christ is Described . . . Delivered in Two Sermons Preached at the Lecture in Kingston Upon Thames* [20 and 27 February 1645] (London, 1645), A3r. For Byfield, see *Cal. Rev.*, 96–7.

¹⁷⁹ N. Stephens, *A Precept for the Baptisme of Infants out of the New Testament* (London, 1651), 38, 61; T. Hall, *The Font Guarded with XX Arguments* (London, 1652), A2v. Cf. the puritan Stephen Denison (d.1649), who in 1621 compared the Baptists’ renunciation of their first baptism with those who give themselves to the Devil: S. Denison, *The Doctrine of Both the Sacraments* (London, 1621), 22. The treatises of Stephens and Hall were both the product of encounters with Baptists at the parochial level. Stephens was responding to a pamphlet written by Robert Everard, whom he takes to task for jeering at a fellow minister, one Mr Angel of Leicester, for saying ‘that witches after conviction say that the Devil perswaded them to deny their first Baptisme’. The dispute between the two men took place in the parish church of Hardwick in Northamptonshire. Hall’s work, in which he claimed that the Baptists’ renunciation of infant baptism differed only in degree from the practice of witches, was the result of a dispute with a group of Baptists at Beoley in Worcestershire. Both debates were probably redolent of many similar encounters and disputes from the 1640s onwards in which the insinuation of witchcraft figured prominently.

¹⁸⁰ The woman in question, Joan Balls, may have been the wife of a Yarmouth Brownist prosecuted in 1630: see ‘Appendix to the Hopkins Trials’, sub Wickham Skeith. Her prosecutor, Edward Willan, was later a prominent persecutor of local Quakers. His religious conservatism and support for moderate Presbyterian reform is evident from a series of marginal comments appended to a collection of his sermons published in 1651. These also suggest an early aversion to sectarianism and its diabolical associations. Like many conservative-minded Presbyterians, Willan later conformed, publishing an ultra loyal defence of the Restoration in which he denounced the ‘new state-physicians’ of the interregnum and their role in applying ‘cruel phlebotomie’ to Charles I: J. Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers . . . from 1650, to . . . 1689*, 2 vols (London, 1753), i, 665–6; E. Willan, *Six Sermons* (London, 1651), 46, 48–9, 101–2, 109, 110; E. Willan, *Beatitas Britanniae; Or, King Charles the Second, Englands Beatitude* [Eye, 31 March 1661] (London, 1661), 27.

that they, like witches, could never hope to attain such a status because both had ‘denied their baptism, that made them of the Church’.¹⁸¹ Eachard’s somewhat idiosyncratic reference to a ‘church’ of witches, symptomatic perhaps of the widespread fears of the godly that England was threatened by an organized conspiracy of devil worshippers, echoed a similar comment made by the Presbyterian heresy hunter Thomas Edwards (c.1599–1648) in conversation with a radical sectary in the same year, 1646. Edwards alleged that the anonymous disputant had argued for ‘a Toleration of Witches’ and an end to their persecution on the grounds that the biblical injunction to extirpate witches (Exodus 22:18) was ‘spoken to the Israelites, not to us’. Edwards, however, stood firm, arguing that because witches ‘in their conscience hold the Devill for their God, and thereupon worship him’ and thus imitated, in inverted form, the true Church, so they, like the radical sectaries, must suffer punishment at the hands of the magistrate.¹⁸²

As it happens, much of the material for Edwards’ voluminous and constantly updated catalogue of heresiography was provided by ministerial colleagues in Essex and Suffolk who shared his fears for the future of the godly commonwealth in the face of the radical onslaught. Edwards, for example, noted the activities of numerous sectaries and subversive preachers in Suffolk at this time, commenting in particular on the heretical beliefs and practices of Lawrence Clarkson, Hanserd Knollys, Andrew Wyke, Katherine Chidley, John Lanseter, and the antinomians William Erbery and Thomas Webbe.¹⁸³ Clarkson cuts a particularly interesting figure as his own account of his wanderings at this time, written in 1660, provides

¹⁸¹ J. Eachard, *The Axe, Against Sin and Error; and the Truth Conquering. A Sermon on Matthew 3.10* (London, 1646), A4r, (a)2r; 16, 17, 27. Eachard, who was accused in the 1630s of disseminating the antinomian views of John Eaton, would appear to have recanted by the time of the witch trials when he was advocating puritan unity in the face of the new threat posed by religious extremists, particularly the Baptists: Bodl., Tanner MS 68, fo. 99v; *CSPD, 1648–1649*, 424–5 [undated, and probably miscellaneized]; J. Eachard, *Good Newes for all Christian Souldiers. Or the Way to Overcome the Devill by the Bloud of the Lambe* (London, 1645), esp. 31–2.

¹⁸² Edwards, *Gangraena*, iii, 187. The idea that witches worshipped the Devil in a perverse imitation and inversion of Christian practice formed a commonplace of much orthodox theological thinking at this time. It was precisely this kind of inference which lay behind the puritan minister Cornelius Burges’ defence of covenanting before Parliament in 1640 by recourse to the example of the Devil’s mimicry in entering into contracts or pacts with witches: C. Burges, *The First Sermon Preached to the Honourable House of Commons* [17 November 1640] (London, 1641), 63–4. In similar fashion, the Devil’s government of Hell was frequently invoked by religious commentators of various persuasions eager to demonstrate the ubiquity of the principles of hierarchy and order in shaping the government of both the cosmos and human society. For examples in contemporary puritan literature, see Herle, *A Payre of Compasses*, 7; T. Hall, *The Pulpit Guarded with XX Arguments* (London, 1651), 29; W. Sclater, *Civil Magistracy by Divine Authority, Asserted, and Laid Forth* [Winchester assizes, 4 March 1651/2] (London, 1652), 8–10. Typical of the genre was the statement of the puritan George Swinnock: ‘Nay there is a government amongst the very devils . . . They that cause so much disorder amongst others, yet have some order among themselves . . . There is a kind of government in Hell, though some would turn all out of the earth’: G. Swinnock, *Men are Gods, or, The Dignity of Magistracy, and the Duty of the Magistrate* [Hertford assizes, 2 August 1653] (London, 1660), mispaginated as 206.

¹⁸³ Edwards, *Gangraena*, i, 77–8; ii, 104–6, 106–7, 110, 126–30; iii, 169–70, 170–1. For a thorough analysis of the sources used by Edwards, and their contextualization within the religious and political debates of the 1640s, see A. Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2004).

important supplementary evidence attesting to the rapid spread and infiltration of radical sectarianism throughout Suffolk in the period immediately prior to the witch hunts. Between 1644 and early 1645 Clarkson, who was preaching his own distinctive brand of Baptist and antinomian views, records visiting a number of towns and villages where witches were later discovered. Just outside Framlingham, for example, one of the main epicentres of witch-hunting, he was alleged to have 'dipped six sisters one night naked', possibly in the same pool where the clergyman John Lowes was later swum as a witch. He was finally arrested, moreover, in a village three miles from Eye, in a part of Suffolk that provided much work for Hopkins and Stearne in the summer of 1645.¹⁸⁴

By the middle years of the 1640s, it seems clear that demonically inspired sectaries had come to replace royalists and Laudians in the puritan roll call of shame, and were now widely perceived by Presbyterian 'moderates' such as Edwards as the greater threat to social, political, and religious order. The obsessional heresy hunter perfectly captured the mood of despondency then prevailing among the majority of mainstream puritans when in 1646 he reviewed the religious developments of the early 1640s, and reported:

how since the Reformation began in the first and second yeers of the Parliament, wherein we thought the Devil had and should have been cast out of England, what fresh footing he hath got again. Oh, many of us, when we saw Satan begin to fall like lightning in the throwing down of Images, Altars, and many other superstitions, in the breaking of the power of the Hierarchie, in the putting out of many Idol scandalous Ministers, expected a blessed time . . . but we now see by this Catalogue and discovery, that the Devil hath recovered himself, and set up his Kingdom by other kind of instruments and in another way then heretofore . . . nay, certainly more damnable Doctrines, heresies, and blasphemies, have been of late vented among us, then in fourscore yeers before: *so that we see in all those great changes, how the Devil hath bestirred himself. . . raising up new instruments to do his work.*¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Eye is approximately three miles from Wickham Skeith, where the Baptist Joan Balls was accused of witchcraft in 1645 (see note 180, this chapter). During his Ranter phase, Clarkson returned to Suffolk where he established a medical practice as a white witch and was assisted by a woman from Sudbury who pretended 'she could do by her Witch-craft whatever she pleased': L. Clarkson, *The Lost Sheep Found* (London, 1660), 10, 12–13, 15, 32. The Baptist missionary Hanserd Knollys (1598–1691) was likewise a familiar presence in Suffolk at this time, and was briefly active at godly centres such as Stradbroke where witches were also detected in 1645: H. Knollys, *Christ Exalted: A Lost Sinner Sought, and Saved by Christ . . . being the Summe of Divers Sermons Preached in Suffolk* (London, 1646), Av. It is quite possible that the frequent resort of the Baptists' opponents to the practice of 'pumping' owed as much to the popular treatment meted out to those suspected of witchcraft as it did to any attempt to symbolically mock the Baptists' resort to public 'dipping' of new converts. Knollys' colleague Samuel Oates, who was also active in Suffolk, was subjected to such an ordeal at Wethersfield and Dunmow in Essex about this time: Edwards, *Gangraena*, iii, 105–6. Early converts to the Quakers, who were equally susceptible to accusations of witchcraft, were often subjected to similar treatment: see Elmer, "Saints or Sorcerers", 153–4.

¹⁸⁵ Edwards, *Gangraena*, ii, 165 (my emphasis). These were not entirely new concerns to Edwards in 1646. Five years earlier, he had made much the same comment in an early attack on toleration and the sects when he dismissed the threat to religion posed by the Devil on the 'left hand' (popery, superstition, ceremonialism, and delinquent ministers) and focused instead on a new diabolical challenge emanating from the 'right hand'. Instead of 'moving against the Church by outward & manifest enemies', the Devil, or so Edwards claimed, now appeared in 'the show of the Orthodox, and

The situation in East Anglia, as intimated elsewhere by Edwards, was particularly acute. Here, ministers like Edward Willan were clearly not alone in detecting a new threat to the stability of the godly commonwealth in the form of a diabolical conspiracy involving witches disguised as sectaries. Indeed, there was an undercurrent of such fears latent throughout the campaign of Hopkins and Stearne. Many of those accused of witchcraft in these years were variously described as ‘outwardly religious’ or former ‘professours of religion’, who had succumbed to diabolical temptation and fallen from grace. Stearne himself confessed as much, claiming that many of those who fell by the wayside were formerly esteemed by their neighbours as ‘Saints on earth’. Among those who fell into this category was Rebecca West, of Lawford in Essex, one of the first victims of the witch hunts. A recent account of her trial, and that of her associates, has plausibly suggested that she was nothing more than an eager participant in a series of ‘bible meetings’ that may have been interpreted by local puritans as clandestine occasions for devil worship.¹⁸⁶ Similar anxieties may also account for the rumours in the London newspapers that one Mistress Waite, the wife of a minister, who was described as an Independent and ‘of a very godly and religious life’, had been executed for witchcraft in Essex at this time.¹⁸⁷

From the outset, then, the strength of religious convictions, particularly a desire on the part of an emerging Presbyterian elite to effect a thorough reformation of the spiritual and moral life of this part of East Anglia, acted as a powerful stimulus to witch-hunting. This much is largely uncontroversial. However, what historians of the trials have failed to acknowledge is the extent to which the failure of the godly to establish a new religious consensus ultimately contributed to the demise of witch-hunting. This can be illustrated from a number of case studies, where the evidence firmly suggests that puritan infighting acted as a brake on witch-hunting. For example, the failure of Hopkins and Stearne to convince the rulers of Colchester that it was in their best interests to root out witches in their midst was almost certainly a product of religious divisions within the corporation. The town had long become a byword for factional strife, where divisions between Presbyterians and Congregationalists were compounded by the emergence of a host of radical sects and groups, each promoting their own specific brand of godly, apocalyptic

in the habit of great strictnesse bewitching many’. In short, Satan had transformed himself into an angel of light [2 Corinthians 11:14] and was now most to be feared among the ‘godly’ sects, where he continued assiduously to undermine true religion: T. Edwards, *Reasons Against the Independent Government of Particular Congregations: As also against the Toleration of Such Churches to be Erected in this Kingdome* (London, 1641), *v-*2r.

¹⁸⁶ J. Stearne, *A Confirmation and Discovery of Witch Craft* (London, 1648), 39; Timbers, ‘Witches’ Sect or Prayer Meeting’, 25–6. For other examples of accused witches, formerly held in high spiritual esteem or regarded as regular churchgoers, see ‘Appendix to the Hopkins Trials’, sub Cambridgeshire: Cambridge (Lendall); Suffolk: Bramford (Elizabeth Richmond), Copdock (Mary Skipper), Ipswich (Mary Lakeland). In addition, one of the Ipswich accused, Rose Parker, may have been the Quaker of the same name who was prosecuted for her faith after the Restoration.

¹⁸⁷ The rumours almost certainly had some foundation in truth. For Henry Waite, minister of Little Clacton, a village at the centre of the Tendring witchcraft trials, see ‘Appendix to the Hopkins Trials’, sub Little Clacton.

thinking. Stearne himself cryptically referred to the opposition that he encountered from two powerful townsmen who were intent on obstructing the work of witch-finding in the borough. In all probability, they represented more radical elements on the town council who had every reason to fear an alliance between the mayor, a former Laudian and royalist who was responsible for inviting the witchfinders to Colchester, and the town's Presbyterians, led by the recorder Sir Harbottle Grimston. By the summer of 1645 a number of Essex parliamentarians, Grimston included, were growing wary of the aims of their radical brethren. At the same time, they continued to work for a rapprochement with the King in the hope that peace might bring about an end to what many saw as the greater threat of impending civil and religious anarchy. Fearful of any such machinations, it thus made perfect sense for the more radical element within the corporation of Colchester to veto their untrustworthy mayor and evict the witchfinders from town under pain of legal redress.¹⁸⁸

Similar thinking may have worked in reverse in the Essex parish of Stisted, where in the same year, 1645, extraordinary allegations of witchcraft, sorcery, and sexual impropriety were levelled against some of the leading figures in county society. Among those implicated were the Aylett and Maxey families, prominent supporters of the King and Anglicanism, and Lady Mary Eden and Sir Martin Lumley (d. 1651), key figures in the parliamentary and puritan cause in Essex. While the evidence is conjectural, the recent religious history of the parish, particularly its slide toward radical sectarianism, may well have encouraged some in the village to interpret any rapprochement between discontented parliamentarians and excluded royalists as part of a demonically inspired attempt to subvert the war effort.¹⁸⁹ Perhaps the clearest evidence, however, for the way in which religious divisions and controversy might work to counteract the puritanical impulse to punish witches in East Anglia in the mid-1640s is to be found in the Norfolk borough of Great Yarmouth. Like so many other corporate towns in this region, Yarmouth at the time of the witch hunts was profoundly divided over issues of religion. For much of the 1620s and 1630s, the energies of the town's leaders had been consumed by religious issues, particularly in relation to the long-standing controversy with the dean and chapter of Norwich over the right to present the town's minister to his living. Throughout this period, the forces of puritanism within the town remained united in opposition to the attempts of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and their local supporters to undermine the corporation and its godly majority. During the early 1640s, however, that consensus began to waver as some within the town began to opt for congregationalism under William Bridge (d.1671), and others became

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., sub Colchester. Colchester's status as one of the most politicized and radicalized towns in England was recognized by Thomas Edwards, who frequently cited the activity of a range of religious radicals and enthusiasts in the town in the 1640s: Edwards, *Gangraena*, i, 65; ii, 3–4, 44–5, 81–2, 136. Grimston's relations with the town (he was both recorder and MP) began to cool as early as 1643, when he moved increasingly toward the religious and political middle ground. Ejected at Pride's Purge, he retired from borough and county offices in 1649 and later welcomed the Restoration of Charles II: *ODNB*, sub Grimston, Sir Harbottle.

¹⁸⁹ See 'Appendix to the Hopkins Trials', sub Stisted.

increasingly attracted to a range of radical opinions and beliefs that some among the orthodox godly attributed to the stationing of an army garrison in the town. In 1645, a fragile truce prevailed between Bridge on the one hand and his former friend and associate John Brinsley (1600–1665), assisted by fellow Presbyterian Thomas Whitfield, on the other. Brinsley and Whitfield felt particularly uneasy about the growing influence of Bridge's separatist congregation in the town, and the fact that it was drawing members in ever larger numbers from their own ministry, which they, for better or worse, continued to perceive as the established and rightful place of worship in the town.¹⁹⁰ Officially, Bridge agreed not to actively proselytize among his former associates, and it may well be that the first wave of witch-hunting provided a welcome opportunity for both parties to unite in the face of a more potent threat to the wellbeing of the godly commonwealth. Certainly, many of those who claimed to have suffered at the hands of the town's witches were drawn equally from the two congregations. Likewise, the legal proceedings against the witches were spearheaded by an alliance consisting of the town's two Presbyterian ministers (Brinsley and Whitfield) alongside the staunchly Congregationalist recorder and MP Miles Corbet (c.1595–1662). The outcome of the trials was thus largely a foregone conclusion. Five of the ten accused were found guilty and ordered to hang. One of the acquitted, moreover, was almost certainly indicted as an associate of the sequestered and staunchly loyal minister, Matthew Brooks (d.1658), whose prosecution enabled the town's various godly groups to focus their ire on a common enemy. If the trials were perceived in this way, they proved to represent something of a false dawn in terms of relations between the two camps. By the time of a new wave of witch prosecutions in April 1646, Bridge's congregation had rescinded its former agreement to refuse membership to new converts, many of whom were travelling up to fourteen miles to attend worship. At the same time, Brinsley and Whitfield, 'being grieved sore displeased that Mr Bridge should gather a church here in Yarmouth', were plying Thomas Edwards with further accounts of the blasphemous tenets of those drawn to the town—developments which, in line with Edwards, they interpreted as the inevitable fruit of separation. Under the revised circumstances, it is perhaps hardly surprising that all five witches tried in the spring of 1646 were acquitted, the divided loyalties of the town's jurors now reflected in their inability to agree as to who or what now posed the greatest threat to the borough's safety.¹⁹¹

The evidence from Yarmouth, where the sources allow for a particularly close examination of the religious condition of the town at the time of the Hopkins trials, provides helpful insights into the political context of witch-hunting in East Anglia at this time. Critically, in 1645, uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the civil

¹⁹⁰ Evidence of the tension between the two groups is well illustrated by a number of works published by Brinsley and Whitfield in this period, as well as the extant records of Bridge's congregation in which it is clear that Yarmouth's Independents were under some pressure in 1645 to maintain the bonds of godly amity with their neighbours and former religious associates: see, for example, J. Brinsley, *A Looking-Glasse for Good Women* [Great Yarmouth, 9 October 1645] (London, 1645).

¹⁹¹ For more detailed discussion of these events, with their respective sources, see 'Appendix to the Hopkins Trials', sub Great Yarmouth.

war and continuing debate in godly circles as to the nature of a religious settlement helped to foster a desire for cooperation and consensus in many towns and villages of the Eastern Association. Yarmouth was probably typical in this respect, and despite the growing cracks in the façade of puritan unity, the prosecution of witches enabled many among the godly to make common cause amid the apocalyptic changes that had befallen the nation since the outbreak of civil war. Some undoubtedly hoped that the extirpation of witches would herald a new era of godly amity and the creation of a reformed commonwealth, purged clean of all spiritual, moral, and political reprobates. These concerns dominated the thinking of the godly of East Anglia in these years. The iconoclast William Dowsing, for example, avidly followed the debate in London over these issues through his reading of the published fast sermons that he assiduously collected and commented upon in these years. Like John Brinsley and Thomas Whitfield at Yarmouth, he was deeply troubled by the growth of excessive freedom and error in religion.¹⁹² Similar anxieties underlay the writings of the Suffolk minister John Eachard, who in 1645 counselled puritan unity in the face of the growing threat of radical sectarianism.¹⁹³ By early 1646, however, the imminent defeat of the King and the growing authority of the army and Independency undermined puritan consensus and provoked irreparable divisions within the ranks of the godly. At the same time, witchcraft ceased to function as a rallying point for such men, who more often than not now worked to undermine, as much as promote, the work of the witchfinders. In March 1646, for example, an Independent clergyman named Enoch Grey interceded on behalf of Mary Coppin, one of the accused Tendring witches, in order to gain a belated reprieve from the House of Lords.¹⁹⁴ The growing gulf

¹⁹² Morrill, 'William Dowsing: The Bureaucratic Puritan', 182–5. Interestingly, Morrill refers to 'something of a collapse of self-confidence' in Dowsing in the mid-1640s, when he became increasingly preoccupied with two issues: the role of the civil magistrate in religion and the extent to which liberty should be extended to tender consciences. Ultimately, he approved those preachers who called for the civil magistrate 'to involve themselves in the work of reformation, to set the limits to freedom, and to police those limits', and despite sympathizing with those who 'found classical presbyterianism too rigid... he came down firmly against Independency and separatism': *ibid.*, 185–6; cf. Morrill, 'William Dowsing and the Administration of Iconoclasm', 9.

¹⁹³ See, for example, Eachard, *Good Newes for all Christian Souldiers*, A2r-Br.

¹⁹⁴ HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/202 [10 March 1646]. The document refers only to a Mr Grey. The most likely candidate was Enoch Grey, a fiery puritan preacher with long-standing connections in London and Essex (see notes 104 and 106, this chapter). At the time of the witch trials he was rector of Wickham St Paul's in Essex and later represented the village in the fourteenth Presbyterian classis for the county. However, he was almost certainly a Congregationalist by religious orientation. In 1649 he called for an end to 'bitter invectives, reproachfull languages, and uncivil carriages, on both sides each towards other', and defended regime change and the regicide on the grounds that it was 'better one should perish then a Nation'. Grey's precise religious beliefs are hard to fathom. In 1644 he took part with two fellow puritan ministers in a public debate with two 'catabaptists' at Terling in Essex: W. A. Shaw, *A History of the English Church during the Civil Wars and under the Commonwealth 1640–1660*, 2 vols (London, 1900), ii, 390; Grey, *Vox Coeli*, 8–9, 10, 25; [J. Stalham], *The Summe of a Conference at Terling in Essex, Ianuarie 11. 1643* (London, 1644). However, he may have harboured radical inclinations of his own. David Como, for example, has suggested that he is probably the shadowy minister known only as 'young Mr Gray' who was responsible for dispersing antinomian views in London in the late 1630s: D. R. Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, 2004), 67–9. If so, then it is just

between Presbyterians and Independents, accompanied by a shift in the fulcrum of political authority toward those who supported the army and liberty of conscience, meant that the later trials in the Isle of Ely and surrounding areas were conducted in a very different atmosphere from the earlier trials in Essex and Suffolk. The Isle itself was notorious among contemporaries as a haven of religious extremism, Thomas Edwards referring to it as ‘that Island of Errors and Sectaries’. By the time of the trials, political and judicial authority here had passed into the hands of trusted radicals, many former parliamentarian soldiers like Thomas Castell or with army connections such as Richard Stane.¹⁹⁵ These were the men that now orchestrated the trials of suspected witches, though not without opposition, much of it in all probability engineered by staunch Presbyterians such as John Gaule (d.1687), who bravely confronted the witchfinders and went into print to expose their ill doings.¹⁹⁶

The lessons of the Hopkins trials for historians are many, but perhaps the most important, as I have tried to show here, relate to the critical role that broader religious and political issues played in helping to shape elite attitudes to the crime of witchcraft. Broadly speaking, the trials in East Anglia were a by-product of the ideological divisions and tensions that had wracked the region in the ten or more years prior to 1645. The end of the Personal Rule, followed by the recall of Parliament, unleashed a puritan backlash throughout England that was felt with particular intensity in the eastern counties of England. Here, the cry for godly reform gained further momentum as a result of the outbreak of the Irish Rebellion and onset of civil war. Moral and spiritual delinquents were ejected from their livings and replaced by godly incumbents, while parish activists set about dismantling the accoutrements of Arminian ceremony and ritual with the support of state-sponsored iconoclasts such as William Dowsing. In the process, the area of the Eastern Association rapidly became a byword for puritan zeal. Despite the continued threat posed by recusant gentry and royalist sympathizers (often one and the same), the godly of the region were nonetheless able to pursue a wide-ranging programme of moral and spiritual reform, sealed through written instruments such as the Covenant and various Protestations of loyalty to Parliament. Everywhere pulpits rang with an urgent plea for a programme of moral regeneration. Restoration of godly order in Church and state, as the Suffolk minister Samuel Fairclough (1594–1677) proclaimed before Parliament in 1641, necessitated urgent action on the part of the magistrate. He alone, equipped with the mandate of heaven, was entrusted to restore England, in the guise of biblical Israel, to its former purity and so ‘totally abolish and extirpate all the accursed things whereby it was disturbed’.¹⁹⁷

possible that Grey’s intervention on behalf of Mary Coppin in 1646 may have been motivated by a desire to protect a like-minded radical.

¹⁹⁵ Edwards, *Gangraena*, i, 84. For Castell and Stane, see ‘Appendix to the Hopkins Trials’, sub Ely.

¹⁹⁶ J. Gaule, *Select Cases of Conscience Touching Witches and Witchcrafts* (London, 1646). For Gaule’s religious and political conservatism, see below.

¹⁹⁷ S. Fairclough, *The Troublers Troubled, or Achan Condemned, and Executed* [4 April 1641] (London, 1641), 24 and *passim*. For Fairclough, and his somewhat ambivalent attitude to the direction of the English Revolution and the witchcraft trials of 1645, see ‘Appendix to the Hopkins Trials’, sub Haverhill.

For many, there is little doubt that the destruction of witches was envisaged as part of this campaign against the general forces of Satan, whose ever expanding ranks included a range of moral, spiritual, and political apostates.

These concerns, of course, were not unique to East Anglia. Throughout England, puritan activists clamoured for revenge against their former oppressors and lobbied their betters in the hope of creating a New Jerusalem in England. The extraordinary conditions that prevailed in East Anglia, however, and which allowed witch-hunting to flourish there briefly in 1645–47, were not replicated elsewhere. While the area of the Eastern Association provided men, money, and arms to Parliament, it rarely witnessed military action, or worse, the despoliation carried out by the armies of both camps in their search for food, horses, and equipment. The settled conditions that allowed puritan magistrates in counties such as Essex and Suffolk to proceed against a range of malefactors, and encouraged men like Hopkins and Stearne to go about their business with the blessing of their superiors, were abnormal for this period. Elsewhere, witches were detected and some were legally tried, many by puritan magistrates eager to impose new standards of justice and morality upon those evildoers in their midst. Rarely, however, were conditions sufficiently stable for witch-hunting to escalate on the same scale as that which took place in East Anglia. Pockets of activity, for example, can be found in some of the more ‘advanced’ godly corporations in Sussex and Kent, where there was also an absence of fighting. In 1645, for example, the puritan mayor of the port town of Rye ordered that two women accused of witchcraft should be swum. They were subsequently strip-searched, found guilty, and hanged.¹⁹⁸ Meanwhile, at Faversham in Kent, four witches were indicted and found guilty of various acts of *maleficium* and witchcraft in circumstances redolent of those prevailing in the areas visited by Hopkins and Stearne. In addition to the fact that the witches admitted entering into covenants with the Devil and entertaining familiars, the prosecutions at Faversham, like so many in East Anglia, owed much to an undercurrent of ideological conflict and the recent appointment of a Presbyterian mayor determined to destroy old enemies in the town.¹⁹⁹ Less than a year after the

¹⁹⁸ ESxRO, RYE/47/138/5–7; 1/13, fos 159, 164, 168. The case is discussed more fully in P. K. Monod, *The Murder of Mr. Grebell: Madness and Civility in an English Town* (New Haven, CT and London, 2003), 78–80. Rye provides yet another example of a deeply divided town, where religious and political tensions ran high throughout the seventeenth century. In the period before the civil war the puritan godly, of which there were many, suffered at the hands of the Laudians and many fled to America: see *ibid.*, 75–8. Witchcraft had earlier become inextricably linked with factional conflict in the protracted case involving Anne Tayler and Susanna Swapper, for which see Gregory, ‘Witchcraft, Politics and “Good Neighbourhood”’ and A. Gregory, *Rye Spirits: Faith, Faction and Fairies in a Seventeenth-Century English Town* (London, 2013).

¹⁹⁹ Anon., *The Examination, Confession, Triall, and Execution, of Joane Williford, Joan Cariden, and Jane Hott who were Executed at Feversham in Kent, for being Witches, on Munday the 19 of September 1645 . . . With the Examination and Confession of Elizabeth Harris, not yet Executed* (London, 1645); KHLK, Fa/JQe 14; M. Gaskill, ‘Witchcraft in Early Modern Kent: Stereotypes and the Background to Accusations’, in Barry, Hester, and Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, 266–9. Elsewhere, Gaskill has noted close parallels between the social and religious condition of Faversham and towns in Suffolk and Essex, including the extent to which the Kent borough had become prone to religious conflict and a major source of emigration to New England prior to the civil war: Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 167–8. The mayor in 1645, Robert Greenstreet, was almost certainly a Presbyterian. In

trials at Faversham, two women from the neighbouring town of Gravesend were tried for witchcraft at the county assizes. Again, there is a suggestion that the accusations levelled against the accused may have been motivated by religious zeal. Among those who provided expert testimony was the recently appointed minister of the parish Henry Symonds, a conservative puritan whose jeremiads against sectaries, sabbath-breakers, and other deviants would later lead to suspicions regarding his loyalty to Cromwell's republic. Moreover, shortly before the trial, the religious peace of the town had been shattered by the preaching of the antinomian Baptist Thomas Webbe, who claimed in his own defence that he had been invited to preach in the town by the minister Symonds.²⁰⁰

Ultimately, however, witch-hunting failed to take hold outside of East Anglia. By 1646, there were clear signs that even here the witch hunters were encountering opposition. Hitherto historians have tended to account for this process by reference to changes in contemporary legal practices. Just as it has commonly been argued that the momentum for witch-hunting in the first place was largely a product of the legal vacuum created by the onset of the civil war, so it has been suggested that the restoration of traditional forms of judicial process, particularly the return of centrally appointed assize court judges to their old circuits, helped to expose the fraudulent behaviour of the witchfinders. Judges, however, as intimated in my earlier discussion, were not immune from external pressures, and they too shared in the religious and political passions of the age. Many, moreover, were only too familiar with many of the local dignitaries with whom they came into contact at the assizes. Judicial independence and objectivity then may well have been exaggerated at the expense of broader religious and political considerations, which I believe continued to shape the conduct and outcome of witchcraft trials in the immediate aftermath of the Hopkins episode. While the East Anglian trials were not the last to occur in England, they did, in retrospect, represent something of a watershed in the prosecution of the crime. From the late 1640s onwards, witchcraft became increasingly and inextricably linked in the imaginations of the ruling elites with the wider religious and political controversies of the age. At the same time, successful indictments diminished as magistrates, judges, and jurors became increasingly wary of the motives of those who sought to initiate prosecutions. The failure to

November 1650, following a backlash against recalcitrant Presbyterians, Robert and his son James were arrested for piracies and treason: *CSPD*, 1650, 431, 445, 470.

²⁰⁰ Cockburn, *Kent Indictment, Charles I*, 478, 490; T. Webbe, *Mr Edwards Pen No Slander* (London, 1646), 10–12. This case has hitherto escaped the notice of historians of witchcraft in Kent, probably because of Ewen's failure to include the record of the indictment in his compilation of home circuit cases of witchcraft printed in 1933. He does, however, note that one of the accused women, Anne Radwell, was ordered to remain in prison in 1648: Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, 234. Symonds's appointment as rector of Milton and Gravesend was brief. In December 1646 he was collated to the living of Southfleet in Kent: *Cal. Rev.*, 442. Symonds was the author of two assize sermons in the 1650s, in which he invoked the conventional image of the commonwealth as a body politic and called on judges and magistrates to clamp down on radical sectarianism and immorality: see H. Symonds, *The Lord Jesus His Commission* [Maidstone, 17 March 1656/7] (London, 1657), esp. A2v; 12, 17, 31–2, 41, 42, 43, 45; H. Symonds, *A Beautiful Swan with Two Black Feet. Or, Magistrates Deity, Attended with Mortality & Misery* [Maidstone, 7 July 1657] (London, 1658).

effect a lasting solution to the nation's divisions in the 1650s, and the gradual emergence of a pluralist state in the years after 1660, was then ultimately responsible for the demise of witchcraft. Traditional explanations were not negligible or without effect, but, in the last resort, the impact of judicial, intellectual, and scientific enlightenment upon educated belief in witchcraft was largely subordinate to the wider religious and political context in which such ideas emerged.

The Hopkins trials thus represent an important landmark in the history of English witchcraft. Briefly, throughout the eastern counties of England and other scattered outposts of puritan zeal, consensus among the godly allowed witch trials to flourish in the belief that such purges represented a crucial stage in the rebirth of a truly reformed, godly state. They ceased abruptly when that consensus—frail at the best of times—disintegrated in the aftermath of the civil war amid prolonged debate over how best to rebuild the long-awaited New Jerusalem. In the meantime, men and women continued to accuse each other of the crime of witchcraft, though more often than not, as we shall see, they did so within the context of inter-factional and denominational disputes, invoking witchcraft as a rhetorical weapon in the bitter war of words typical of such conflicts. Now, rather than bringing communities together, witchcraft was more likely to polarize and divide them. This, moreover, was a process that gathered pace in the 1650s, a period characterized by religious and political experimentation as England's new rulers searched for new solutions to the crisis that had engulfed the body politic.

4

Witchcraft in an Age of Political Uncertainty Interregnum England, 1649–1660

What least inkling have we of these things in all the Scriptures?
Whence received the Church of England this Doctrin? O foolish
England, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth?
Surely it was the Pope.

T. Ady, *A Candle in the Dark: Or, A Treatise Concerning
the Nature of Witches and Witchcraft* (London, 1656), 93

INTRODUCTION

The great witch scare in East Anglia in the mid-1640s was undoubtedly a major turning point in the history of English witchcraft. In time, as we shall see, it would be widely cited by sceptics as a prime instance of how those in authority might manipulate belief in witchcraft for mercenary and partisan ends. However, in the decade following the execution of Charles I and the establishment of a republic, cases of witchcraft continued to feature prominently in the English courts. The interregnum, despite witnessing dramatic religious, political, and intellectual change, did not usher in an age of enlightenment with regard to the legal pursuit and punishment of witches. Instead, the tendency for witchcraft to become subsumed in wider religious and political conflicts after the Hopkins trials continued apace, a process that can be illustrated in a number of ways. First, the language of demonology continued to inform polemical debate in the period, in much the same way as it had done in the period immediately before and after the outbreak of the civil war. Second, attempts to prosecute witches in the courts continued to emanate, first and foremost, from towns and villages that were often paralysed by religious conflict and were more often than not promoted by those seeking to acquire renewed religious and/or political legitimacy within their respective communities. Finally, in partial response to these two events, further attempts to reopen the debate over the nature and reality of witchcraft were increasingly shaped by partisan religious and political preoccupations—a pattern that would continue into the Restoration period and beyond. None of these developments, it should be stressed, were unique to this period. As I have tried to show, the political potential of witchcraft was evident from the passage of the second witchcraft statute in 1563 and continued to inform, and be informed by,

broader religious and political concerns thereafter. However, there can be little doubt that witchcraft's appeal as a vehicle for the expression of political anxieties gathered pace after the breakdown of civil and religious consensus in the early 1640s. By 1660, sensitivity to witchcraft and demonological language was firmly embedded in the political consciousness, a fact that would have fatal consequences for the future of demonological belief and would help lay the foundations for an end to the witch trials.

WITCHCRAFT, WITCH-HUNTING, AND THE POLITICS OF SECTARIANISM

The process whereby religious opponents resorted to demonological invective in order to stigmatize their adversaries and cast doubt on their claims to divine favour was well established by the middle decades of the seventeenth century. Since the earliest days of the Reformation in England, Protestant controversialists consistently promoted the idea that Roman Catholics were Satanists in disguise and depicted the head of their Church, the Pope, as the 'witch of Rome'. In time, given the propensity of early modern protagonists to think and argue by recourse to the logic of binary oppositions, any religious opponent, theoretically, lay open to such a charge. In 1599, for example, Bishop Bancroft resorted to such thinking when he compared the ability of puritans or 'precisians' to correspond with each other over long distances, and thus engage in acts of subversion, to the behaviour of witches, who were likewise rumoured to communicate in this way.¹ Almost forty years later, if one is to believe the idiosyncratic puritan minister Thomas Larkham (1602–1669), some bishops were reticent to act against puritans because they feared them as witches.² By this period, as we have seen, the puritans and their opponents regularly engaged in such name-calling, a phenomenon that grew apace in the 1640s and 1650s as the country dissolved into internecine conflict. Now, of course, the war of words was mirrored by a bitter armed conflict in which accusations of witchcraft were routinely batted to and fro. Few, if any, were

¹ A. Peel (ed.), *Tracts Ascribed to Richard Bancroft Edited from a Manuscript in the Library of St John's College, Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1953), 77–8.

² T. Larkham, *The Attributes of God Unfolded, and Applied... Delivered in Sundry Sermons, at Tavistocke in Devon... Divided into Three Parts* (London, 1656), ii, 134–5. Larkham claimed in the same work and elsewhere that at some date prior to the civil war he had been hauled before the courts of Star Chamber and High Commission on trumped up charges of inciting faction, heresy, witchcraft, rebellion, and treason. It has not been possible to substantiate these claims, but it is interesting to note that he was later accused by a group of his own disaffected parishioners at Tavistock in Devon of calling some of their number 'sons of witches' and using much 'Gibble-gabble' when excoriating others for using charms to cure the toothache. There may have been some truth in these claims, as suggested by comments he made against his detractors in other published sermons: *ibid.*, Br; F. Glanville et al., *The Tavistocke Naboth Proved Nabal* (London, 1658), 2–3, 40–1; T. Larkham, *The Wedding-Supper: As it was Handled out of the Fourteen First Verses of the 22. Chapter of Matthew, in Sundry Exercises in Tavistock in Devon* (London, 1652), 114–15, 136. For Larkham's chequered career, see ODNB, sub Larkham, Thomas; S. H. Moore (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Larkham, 1647–1669* (Woodbridge, Church of England Record Soc., 17, 2011).

immune from the charge of witchcraft or entering into compacts with the Devil to further their own partisan ends. More moderate, mainstream puritans, for example, who wished to retain a state Church infrastructure and a system of regulatory discipline, consistently detected demonic forces at work among the rapidly growing number of sects who rejected any form of state-sponsored system of worship. The sectaries for their part not only gave as good as they got, but also resorted to similar language in deriding the claims of their radical competitors from whom, in many respects, they differed least in terms of their theological outlook and rejection of puritan orthodoxy. The early Baptists and Quakers, for example, frequently resorted to *lex talionis* in debate with each other and their more orthodox adversaries, each depicting the other as in thrall to the Devil and demonic witchcraft. Few escaped the stigma, and most retaliated in kind. Those who inhabited the radical fringe of the interregnum were particularly prone to such accusations. Among those who suffered in this way were the Quaker leader George Fox, the prominent Ranter John Robins, the pseudo-Christ William Franklin, and prophet Lodowick Muggleton.³ Like the practices and beliefs of the Baptists, those of the Quakers were carefully scrutinized for evidence of demonic infiltration. Early Friends were often charged with using a variety of diabolical practices to ensnare new recruits, while their prodigious feats of fasting and quaking fits were readily reconstructed within conventional demonological lore as acts traditionally ascribed to witches and those possessed by demons.⁴

Occasionally, stereotyping of this kind generated actual attempts to prosecute Quakers as witches. More often than not, such prosecutions were the product of deeply engrained tensions between the Quakers and their religious opponents, some of whom, such as the Baptists, were almost certainly motivated to act in this way out of fear and jealousy of the Quakers' success in making converts from among their own congregations.⁵ While some of these cases were widely publicized and were undoubtedly promoted in order to maximize their polemical value in the war of words between the sects, it would be a mistake to see them as little more than publicity stunts or works of propaganda. Contemporaries of all shades and opinions widely held to the idea that religious apostates represented a rich source of new recruits for the Devil and his minions. There is little doubt,

³ P. Elmer, '“Saints or Sorcerers”: Quakerism, Demonology and the Decline of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century England', in J. Barry, M. Hester, and G. Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge, 1996), 147, 150 n.18; *Severall Proceedings in Parliament*, 87 [22–29 May 1651], sub 28 May; Humphrey Ellis, *Pseudochristus: Or, A True and Faithful Relation of the Grand Impostures . . . Lately Spread Abroad . . . by William Franklin and Mary Gadbury* (London, 1650), 9, 43, 55–6; L. Muggleton, *The Acts of the Witnesses of the Spirit* (London, 1699), 51, 53. Other radicals to fall under the stigma of witchcraft included the reclusive mystic Roger Crab (d.1680), the former Digger William Everard, and the Berkshire minister who implicated him, John Pordage (1607–1681); R. Crab, *The English Hermite, or, Wonder of This Age* (London, 1655), unpaginated dedication; J. Pordage, *Innocencie Appearing Through the Dark Mists of Pretended Guilt. Or, a Full and True Relation of the Unjust and Illegal Proceedings . . . against John Pordage of Bradfield* (London, 1655), 9; C. Fowler, *Daemonium Meridianum. Satan at Noon* (London, 1655), 18, 55, 80, 87, 135, 148, 149.

⁴ These are discussed more fully in Elmer, '“Saints or Sorcerers”', 145–61.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 150–2.

moreover, that the prevalence of such thinking was responsible for renewed attempts in the late 1640s and 1650s to initiate large-scale witch hunts in a nation that remained unreformed in the eyes of many, especially those of a puritanical bent. Two episodes in particular stand out in this respect, as in both cases the urge to persecute witches would appear to have emanated from specific religious groups eager to acquire status and legitimacy in the changed circumstances of the interregnum.

In the first instance—that relating to the town of Newcastle upon Tyne in north-east England—at least sixteen women were executed for the crime of witchcraft between 1649 and 1650.⁶ There is little doubt that the witch panic that erupted here in these years was instigated by an energetic group of puritan ministers and laymen, involving (as at Yarmouth in 1645) collaboration between Presbyterians and Independents on the town council, who jointly aimed to implement a programme of moral regeneration in the town and surrounding countryside. In some respects, there are parallels here with events in parts of East Anglia in the mid-1640s. If anything, however, what is most striking about the location of this particular bout of witch-hunting is the fact that it lay at the heart of a region that, unlike East Anglia, was largely virgin territory for puritan preachers prior to the civil war. The point was well made by the Presbyterian minister Robert Jenison (1583–1652) in 1646 when in a fast sermon preached before the town's dignitaries he predicted the imminent punishment of a whole range of evildoers—papists, atheists, malignants, and lukewarm Protestants—in the wake of the messianic victories of Parliament's armies.⁷ In the ensuing years, strenuous efforts were made by Jenison and his supporters to create an embryonic Presbyterian system of worship in Northumberland as well as to secure the appointment of godly ministers to local livings. Witchcraft occasionally surfaced as a concern in this period of renewed evangelization. For much of the latter part of the 1640s, for example, a well-connected Northumbrian woman doggedly sought justice for her daughter, whom she alleged was the victim of a local witch (herself a well-connected recusant). Among those she turned to in her hour of need were three Presbyterian ministers, Robert Balsom, Robert Jenison, and one Mr Strother. At about the same time, in 1648, there were also reports in the London press of a Scottish witch performing her magical tricks upon 'an eminent' inhabitant of the town of Berwick

⁶ For the religious and political backdrop to the trials in Newcastle at this time, I rely extensively on R. Howell Jnr, *Newcastle Upon Tyne and the Puritan Revolution: A Study of the Civil War in North England* (Oxford, 1967), 232–3 and *passim*.

⁷ R. Jenison, *The Return of the Sword or a Divine Prognostick Delivered in a Sermon at Newcastle* [30 April 1646] (London, 1648); cf. Edward Bowles (1613–1662), Presbyterian minister at York, who in the same year lamented that the four northern counties were bereft of able, godly ministers prior to the civil war, a fact that helped explain the overwhelming support for Charles I among the people of this region; E. Bowles, *Manifest Truths or an Inversion of Truths Manifest* (London, 1646), 32. Jenison had a long connection with the town of Newcastle. He was born and raised there, and served as town lecturer between 1622 and 1639, when he was deprived for nonconformity; for a brief resumé of his career, see *ODNB*, sub Jenison, Robert.

on the Scottish border.⁸ It was not until the spring of 1649, however, that the town council at Newcastle, now firmly under Presbyterian control, sent to Scotland for an expert witchpricker who was employed to root out witches in the town. He was also active in nearby Berwick and Gateshead, where further witches were discovered and, in all probability, executed.⁹ The impetus to arraign and convict witches in north-east England at this time almost certainly proceeded from the puritanical zeal to impose godly order and discipline upon the region. It is equally apparent, however, that the main obstacle to an escalation of the witch hunt here came from the deputy governor of the town, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Hobson (d.1666), who was instrumental in exposing the witchpricker as a fraud. In the period immediately prior to the witch trials, Hobson had founded a Baptist church at Newcastle, and in subsequent years he utilized his radical contacts in the region in order to counterbalance the authority of those Presbyterians and Independents who dominated the government of the corporation. During the 1650s, witchcraft prosecutions petered out as the latter increasingly focused their attention on the activities of radical extremists like the former Leveller agitator Robert Everard, and the newly emerging sects, especially the Quakers, who were frequently demonized by their more orthodox protagonists.¹⁰

⁸ Anon., *Wonderfull News from the North. Or a True Relation of the Sad and Grievous Torments, Inflicted upon the Bodies of Three Children of Mr George Muschamp, Late of the County of Northumberland, by Witch-craft* (London, 1650), 3–4, 15; Anon., *Packets of Letters from Scotland, Berwick, Newcastle and York, to Members of the House of Commons Concerning the Transactions of the Parliament of Scotland, the Commissioners of the Parliament of England* (London, 1648), unpaginated, letter dated 29 March 1648. Strother was appointed to Newcastle at the same time as Jenison was restored to his former living in the town in December 1644: W. A. Shaw, *A History of the English Church 1640–1660*, 2 vols (London, 1900), ii, 321. For Balsom, who was himself suspected of witchcraft by royalist soldiers in the civil war, see above, 113. The case of the possession of the children of Mary Moore is discussed more fully in D. Purkiss, 'Invasions: Prophecy and Bewitchment in the Case of Margaret Muschamp', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 17 (1998), 235–53; P. Almond, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2004), 358–90.

⁹ J. Fuller, *The History of Berwick upon Tweed* (Edinburgh, 1799), 155–6; W. H. D. Longstaffe (ed.), *Memoirs of the Life of Mr Ambrose Barnes, Late Merchant and Sometime Alderman of Newcastle upon Tyne* (London and Edinburgh, Surtees Soc., 50, 1866), 354. It may be no coincidence that the trial of the Gateshead witches in early 1650 took place at the same time as the arrival in the town of its new minister, Thomas Weld (1595–1661). Formerly a minister at Terling in Essex, Weld was a diehard puritan who had emigrated to New England in the 1630s following his suspension and excommunication by Laud. By the 1650s he was promoting the Congregational way in church worship and discipline and was an uncompromising opponent of the Baptists and Quakers; *Cal. Rev.*, 517–18; R. Howell Jnr, 'Thomas Weld of Gateshead: The Return of a New England Puritan', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 48 (1970), 303–32; *ODNB*, sub Weld, Thomas.

¹⁰ Hobson had been resident with the army in Newcastle since the summer of 1648. There seems little doubt that the presence of the army created religious tension in the town, not least between local puritans and army radicals, the latter led by Colonel Robert Lilburne (1614–1665) and his junior officer Hobson. Lilburne, brother of the Leveller John, was a champion of the Baptists and the cause of religious toleration; for brief summaries of the careers of both men, see *ODNB*, sub Hobson, Paul; Lilburne, Robert. For the growing conflict between the conservative puritan governors of the town and the forces of radical sectarianism, see R. Howell Jnr, 'The Newcastle Clergy and the Quakers', in R. Howell Jnr, *Puritans and Radicals in North England* (Lanham, MD, New York, and London, 1984), 136–61.

Despite the absence of a strong puritanical tradition in north-east England, there are clear parallels here between the conditions that gave rise to witch-hunting in 1649–50 and those that prevailed in East Anglia a few years earlier. In both cases, the impetus to search out witches drew upon the deep-seated desire of mainstream puritans to impose their vision of a reformed godly society upon the inhabitants of the two regions. Years of religious persecution and civil strife now gave way to millennial expectations of the imminent implementation of a new moral, spiritual, and political order that naturally entailed the destruction of witches alongside other agents of Satan. In both cases, however, the urge to extirpate witches soon gave way to caution and disbelief, a product no doubt of the accompanying disintegration of puritan unity in the face of religious and political developments in the two regions. Similar processes were at work in our second example, that of Kent, which experienced significant bouts of witch-hunting in the 1650s. Here, however, there was an interesting new development that related to the peculiar circumstances prevailing in this part of England. Whereas in East Anglia and the north-east, the impulse to hunt witches proceeded primarily from the anxieties and concerns of mainstream puritans, who wished to retain a state-enforced system of worship and discipline, in Kent the urge to punish witches would appear to have emanated from those radical sects who fought tooth and nail against any attempt by the magistrate to impose or constrain the religious rights or freedoms of the individual.

We have already detected a strong correlation in Kent in the years before 1649 between sensitivity to witchcraft and religious conflict. This pattern was to continue in the 1650s, when the county experienced a wave of witchcraft trials that were at their most intense in the period immediately prior to the establishment of the Cromwellian Protectorate. The epicentre of witch-hunting in this period was the Weald, particularly the large, semi-industrial parishes centred on the town of Cranbrook. Here in 1652 and 1653, large numbers of witches were detected and sent to trial and at least six were subsequently executed. The trials were widely reported in contemporary news-sheets and a pamphlet, and excited a great deal of interest beyond the boundaries of Kent. Those who attended the assizes, for example, included the celebrated antiquary Elias Ashmole (1617–1692) and his friend, the eminent botanist John Tradescant (1608–1662), both men travelling from Oxford to witness the trials.¹¹ From the perspective of this study, however, what stands out about these trials, and others in Kent at this time, was the role played by men drawn from the new Cromwellian county elite, and their parish supporters, in instigating and promoting such cases. Of the seven magistrates, for

¹¹ *French Occurrences*, 13 [2–9 August 1652], 77 [mispaginated in original as 75]; Anon., *A Prodigious & Tragickall History of the Arraignment, Tryall, Confession, and Condemnation of Six Witches at Maidstone in Kent... Collected from the Observations of E. G. Gent... and Digested by H. F. Gent* (London, 1652); Bodl., Ashmole MS 1136, fo. 27. Three of the women were subsequently reprieved by order of Parliament, but the pardons arrived too late; *Commons' Journal*, vii, 160, 173. Another spectator at the trial was the Kent gentleman and royalist Sir Robert Filmer, whose sceptical attitude toward witchcraft was clearly ignited by what he perceived as an acute miscarriage of justice. I discuss Filmer's views on witchcraft, and their origin in his political antipathy to the interregnum, below, 161–3.

example, who were responsible for the original examination and commitment of witches for trial in 1652–53, at least five were committed republicans.¹² Even more noteworthy, however, was the role played by local sectaries in witnessing against their neighbours for witchcraft. At Cranbrook, for example, the prosecution brought against Thomas Creed and Dorothy Avery in 1652 was largely instigated by two men, Thomas Ferrall¹³ and Thomas Weller,¹⁴ with long-standing reputations as religious radicals. Weller in particular was well connected to some of the leading figures among the local gathered churches, which also provided a number of witnesses and victims in other witchcraft cases at Cranbrook at this time. Alexander

¹² George Cadwell, George Jackson, Thomas Plumer, John Robson or Rabson, and James Skeetes (d.1654); J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records. Kent Indictments 1649–1659* (London, 1989), 113, 128. All five were signatories to the Kent petition of December 1648 calling for the speedy trial and execution of the King; Bodl., Tanner MS 57, fos 476–8. Robson was a member of a gathered church that met in Cranbrook. In May 1653 he, along with Cadwell, signed a letter addressed to Cromwell on behalf of his church calling for the appointment of godly radicals to the Barebones Parliament, and demanding the exclusion of ‘wilful rigid Presbyters’; J. Nickolls (ed.), *Original Letters and Papers of State, Addressed to Oliver Cromwell... From the Year MDCXLIX to MDCLVIII* (London, 1743), 96, 97. Among the five men nominated was fellow JP and Baptist George Jackson of Sandhurst, near Cranbrook, who, in August 1653, left bequests to several gathered churches and pastors (many of whom supported his candidature as an MP in that year) in Kent. In addition, he asked his friend, co-religionist, and fellow JP John Robson to act as overseer: TNA, PROB 11/239, fos 180v–181v [will of George Jackson, 28 August 1653; proved 20 January 1653/4]. Richard Kilburne (1605–1678) and William Boys, the other two magistrates responsible for examining witches in 1652–53, resided at Hawkhurst. Kilburne was a lawyer and antiquary who published a number of topographical works on Kent. Little is known of his religious and political beliefs, but he was almost certainly sympathetic to radical dissent. At the Restoration, he counted the nonconformist Samuel Jeake the elder (1623–1690) of Rye as a close friend: *ODNB*, sub Kilburne, Richard.

¹³ J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records. Kent Indictments Charles I* (London, 1995), 118 [where Ferrall appears as Verrall]. Some time in 1644 Thomas Ferrall’s mother purchased the font stone from Cranbrook church, an event that was in all probability related to the growing radicalization of the parish under its new incumbent, John Saltmarsh (d.1647). Twenty years later, Ferrall was forced to return it by the authorities at Canterbury. In all likelihood, Ferrall shared the growing antipathy of many of the more ‘advanced’ puritans in the parish for infant baptism. It was here in Cranbrook in 1644 that Francis Cornwell declared paedobaptism to be ‘an antichristian innovation’. Within a short time, Cranbrook had established its own Baptist congregation—one of the first in Kent—and acted as a major centre of further proselytization; W. Tarbutt, *The Annals of Cranbrook Church*, 2 vols (Cranbrook, 1870–75), i, 31; CCAL, DCb-J/X/6.9, fo. 354; *ODNB*, sub Saltmarsh, John; C. Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist, in His Two Last and Strongest Garrisons; of Compulsion of Conscience and Infants Baptisme* (London, 1644), 1.

¹⁴ Thomas Weller (d.1652) may well have been ill at the time of the trial. In his will, where he described himself as a yeoman, he refers to the recent purchase of the manor of Choyne and other lands from the puritan grandee Sir Walter Roberts and others: TNA, PROB 11/224, fos 351r–v [13 July 1652; proved 30 September 1652]. Weller was clearly a radical puritan of long standing. In July 1642 he was indicted at the assizes for interrupting Robert Abbot (d.1652), the moderate puritan vicar of Cranbrook, while he was conducting a baptism in Cranbrook parish church: Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar... Kent Indictments Charles I*, 448. Two years later he served as constable of Cranbrook hundred, when he was indicted for failing to make returns to the grand jury; *ibid.*, 474. In his will, he made bequests to his cousin John Weller and John Robson (signatories to the letter to Cromwell of May 1653: note 12, this chapter), as well as Richard Robson, a wealthy Cranbrook clothier, who had presented the Kent petition against episcopacy to Sir Edward Dering in December 1640 (he also signed the 1653 letter on behalf of another gathered church that met outside Cranbrook). The radical credentials of the Robsons, John Weller, Thomas Weller, and Thomas Ferrall are also evident from their appearance as signatories in the same cluster to the petition in favour of regicide, dated December 1648; L. B. Larking (ed.), *Proceedings, Principally in the County of Kent, in Connection with the Parliament Called in 1640* (London, Camden Soc., 80, 1862), 25–6; Bodl., Tanner MS 57, fo. 476.

Osbourne, for example, whose wife Elizabeth allegedly suffered at the hands of five Cranbrook women in 1652, was Thomas Weller's cousin. He was also the grandson of Joan Weller, who died in 1637 or 1638, whose will was witnessed by Thomas Ferrall.¹⁵ Osbourne almost certainly shared the growing antipathy of Ferrall and Weller for authorized parish worship. Two of his sons were recorded by the parish clerk as unbaptized, as were those of another witness in this case, Michael Reynolds.¹⁶

Elsewhere in the Wealden parishes of central Kent, a region long associated with radical Protestantism, the link between sectarianism and witch-hunting was equally in evidence. At Staplehurst in 1654 and neighbouring Goudhurst in 1657, leading figures in the county's precocious Baptist movement would appear to have taken the lead in prosecuting local women for witchcraft. At the former, Richard Kingsnorth (d.1673), one of the most prominent spokesmen for the Baptists in Kent and the head of a congregation of general Baptists at nearby Spilshill, was the chief witness in the trial of a Staplehurst widow accused of murdering the infant son of John Reeve.¹⁷ Reeve, in all probability, was the Baptist minister of that name who served as joint elder with William Jeffery at Sevenoaks in the 1650s and was imprisoned at the Restoration.¹⁸ Three years later, George Weldish, a well-connected Baptist and

¹⁵ Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar... Kent Indictments 1649–1659*, 117; TNA, PROB 11/224, fo. 351v; CCAL, DCb/PRC 16/217/W/8 [will of Joan Weller, dated 10 November 1637; proved 10 January 1637/8]. Joan stipulated that 'my revered pastor', Robert Abbot (minister at Cranbrook from 1616 to 1643), should be paid twenty shillings on preaching her funeral sermon.

¹⁶ KHLc, Cranbrook Parish Registers, baptisms, 1642–1667 [typescript]. During this period the parish clerk kept a separate record of all those born but not baptized in Cranbrook. Most were almost certainly separatists, who had rejected communion with the unfaithful in the established church. Some later recanted and were re-admitted as adults: see A. Poole, 'Baptismal Delay: Some Implications from the Parish Registers of Cranbrook and Surrounding Parishes in the Kentish Weald', *Local Population Studies*, 65 (2000), 9–28.

¹⁷ Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar... Kent Indictments 1649–1659*, 180, 181. Kingsnorth assumed leadership of the Spilshill (Staplehurst) church in about 1644 following the conversion of Christopher Blackwood (d.1670), rector of Staplehurst, to Baptist principles after hearing Francis Cornwell preach at Cranbrook (note 13, this chapter): *ODNB*, sub Kingsnorth, Richard; Blackwood, Christopher; R. J. Acheson, 'The Development of Religious Separatism in the Diocese of Canterbury, 1590–1660', PhD thesis (Kent, 1983), 209, 211–12. The parish registers of Staplehurst confirm that Richard Kingsnorth Senior died in 1673 (not 1677), when he was described as an 'ancient... farmer'. These also contain detailed records relating to his many children, all of whom were members of the Spilshill congregation, and help to supplement the meagre account of his life in the *ODNB*: CKS, P347 1/1–3 [parish registers of Staplehurst, All Saints, births, marriages, and deaths, 1538/96–1694/95].

¹⁸ Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar... Kent Indictments 1649–1659*, 181. Little is known about Reeve. He was probably the son of Thomas Reeve of Staplehurst. One of this name, described as a yeoman, was buried at Staplehurst in 1663: TNA, PROB 11/220, fos 334v–335r [3 May 1651; proved 13 February 1651/2]; KHLc, P347 1/1–3, sub burials, 1 April 1663. According to the eighteenth-century Baptist historian Thomas Crosby, 'all I can obtain concerning him is, that he was joint elder with Mr William Jeffery'; T. Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists, from the Reformation to the Reign of King George I*, 4 vols (London, 1738–40), iii, 99. In 1655, along with Kingsnorth and other leading Kent Baptists, he signed an apology repudiating the common fear that his co-religionists were 'no friends to Magistracy and Civil Government' and signalling their willingness to live peaceably under a government that allowed them liberty of conscience. Five years later, in the altered circumstances of the Restoration, he again appears as a signatory to a pamphlet reaffirming the Baptists' loyalty to the new government. He was nonetheless imprisoned shortly afterwards. In January 1661, he and three other leaders of the Baptist movement in Kent petitioned for their release from Maidstone gaol: *The Humble Representation and Vindication of the Messengers, Elders,*

associate of Kingsnorth, testified against a mother and daughter at Goudhurst accused of entertaining diabolical familiars and practising witchcraft, for which the two women were subsequently executed.¹⁹ Further research in the archives might, I suspect, reveal further links between radical sectarianism and the pursuit of witches, especially in light of the fact that so many of the communities that produced witch trials in the 1650s were, like Cranbrook, Staplehurst, and Goudhurst, established centres of religious dissent and interdenominational conflict. Ashford (1651),²⁰

and Brethren Belonging to Several of the Baptized Churches in this Nation . . . Concerning their Opinions and Resolutions Touching the Civil Government of these Nations, and of their Deportment under the Same (London, 1655); *A Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith Set Forth by Many of Us, who are falsely called Ana-Baptists* (London, 1660); *The Humble Petition and Representation of the Sufferings of Several Peaceable and Innocent Subjects, called by the Name of Anabaptists Now Prisoners in Maidstone Jail* (London, 1661). The other victim of witchcraft at Staplehurst, William Tolhurst (d.1667), a local butcher, was probably the father of Ursula Tolhurst, a member of Kingsnorth's church who married the pastor's son, James. Likewise, the other witness in this case, Susan Hartnupp, was probably the wife of Matthew Hartnupp, another member of the Spilshill congregation: KHLc, K. W. H. Howard, 'Church Book of the Smarden Baptists, 1640–1685' [typescript of 23/SMA], fo. 2; KHLc, P347 1/1–3, sub marriages, 23 July 1663. Tolhurst's name appears as a signatory to the December 1648 petition in favour of the regicide; Bodl., Tanner MS 57, fo. 477.

¹⁹ Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar . . . Kent Indictments 1649–1659*, 252. The verdict was brought in by Sir Matthew Hale, a judge who combined a strong belief in the reality of witchcraft with a profound attachment to the ideal of religious toleration (see further below, 227–8). Weldish's Baptist roots are strongly suggested by the fact that in 1663 he, along with Francis Cornwell of Marden and two of Richard Kingsnorth's sons, acted as executor to the will of a local Staplehurst man who described them as 'wellbeloved friends and brethren in the Lord'. Cornwell, a former clergyman and one of the founding fathers of the Baptist movement in Kent, had himself witnessed in a witchcraft trial in 1636 (see above, 79–80). Thomas Kingsnorth followed in his father's footsteps, establishing a Baptist church at nearby Frittenden. Like so many of the Kent Baptists, Weldish had a long record of dissent. In 1642 he was arrested for attending a conventicle at the house of William Harvey in Cranbrook. With Kingsnorth and many other Baptists, he signed the county petition in favour of regicide (other signatories included Stephen Garrett, Thomas Read, and William Sadler, who may be the men of the same names who gave evidence against the Allens for witchcraft at Goudhurst in 1657); ESxRO, FRE MS 7297 [copy of will of John Bailly of Staplehurst, husbandman, 14 April 1663; proved 10 February 1663/4]; F. Bate, *The Declaration of Indulgence 1672: A Study in the Rise of Organised Dissent* (Liverpool, 1908), Appendix VII, xxxii; Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar . . . Kent Indictments, Charles I*, 450; Bodl., Tanner MS 57, fos 477, 478, 482. George Weldish may have been related to William Weldish, who gave evidence in the case against the suspected witch Mary Reade of Lenham (about seven miles from Staplehurst) in 1652; Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar . . . Kent Indictments, 1649–1659*, 118.

²⁰ KHLc, Q/SB2/12, 90; Q/SRc E4, fos 47, 50. There would appear to have been a proto-Baptist cell operating at Ashford by the mid-1630s, when William Bowling, his wife, and apprentice were presented for a whole range of religious offences. In 1634, for example, he was described as 'a profest separatist [who] taketh upon him (though a layman) to baptise children and to preach'. Three years later, he was prosecuted for describing the Church as 'antichristian' and rejecting the King as supreme in matters of religion: LPL, VG 4/15, fo. 42; 4/22, fo. 112; R. J. Acheson, 'Sion's Saint: John Turner of Sutton Valence', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 99 (1983), 189–95. In 1640, soldiers pulled down the altar rails at Ashford in what John Walter has described as 'a piece of street theatre'. At about the same time, one Susan May of Ashford preached in a barn that the Devil was the father of the Pope, the Pope the father of those who wore surplices, 'wherefore consequently the Divell was the Father of all those which did not love Puritans'. In a similar spirit, Joseph Boden, pastor in the town, informed the county committee in 1644 that he that refused to bear arms or support Parliament 'is no other then a rebell and traytoure against God'. Baptist activity in and around the town was recorded throughout the 1640s, culminating in a great disputation in the parish church in 1649 between the Baptists and local Presbyterians at which, it was reported, over 3,000 were present. Ashford, not surprisingly, was also an early centre of Quaker activism: J. Walter, 'Abolishing Superstition with Sedition? The Politics of

Benenden (1652 and 1653),²¹ Boughton under Blean (1649),²² Bredhurst (1649),²³ Canterbury (1651),²⁴ High Halden (1652),²⁵ Lenham (1652),²⁶ Minster (1651),²⁷

Popular Iconoclasm in England, 1640–1642', *Past and Present*, 183 (2004), 109; Anon., *A Discoverie of Six Women Preachers in Middlesex, Kent, Cambridgeshire, and Salisbury* (London?, 1641), 4; J. Boden, *An Alarme Beat Up in Sion, to War Against Babylon: Or the Summe of a Sermon upon Revelation 18. and the 6. Preached at Knowle* (London, 1644), 16; T. Edwards, *Gangraena* (London, 1646), iii, 95; T. James, *A Vindication of that Part of Spira's Despair which is Challenged by the Anabaptists* (London, 1695), unpaginated preface; N. Penney (ed.), *The First Publishers of Truth: Being Early Records... of the Introduction of Quakerism into... England and Wales* (London, 1907), 145–6.

²¹ For Benenden, see below, 150–1. The village was the site of a further trial in 1665: J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records. Kent Indictments Charles II 1660–1675* (London, 1995), 144. The case is unnoticed in Ewen, *Witch Hunting*.

²² Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar... Kent Indictments, 1649–1659*, 16. Boughton was a centre of Laudian and royalist sentiment for much of the 1630s and 1640s. Samuel Smith, the deeply unpopular minister foisted on the parish in 1637 by Laud, was charged in early 1641 for a variety of offences. He was a ceremonialist and supporter of the altar rail policy, bowed at the name of Jesus, and prosecuted some members of his flock for 'gadding' to sermons. He was also charged with drunkenness and was alleged to have said that 'he would warrant the parliament would com to noe good'. Among those who gave evidence against him was one William Hilles, probably the man of the same name who witnessed in the witchcraft trial of 1649. In the year before the trial, Boughton's gentry were prominent in supporting the abortive royalist insurrection in the county. The subsequent strength of religious radicalism in the village is suggested by the fact that a Baptist meeting was established here by 1672: *Wal. Rev.*, 225; Larking (ed.), *Proceedings, Principally in the County of Kent*, 174–5; A. Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion 1640–1660* (Leicester, 1966), 247; Bate, *Declaration of Indulgence 1672*, Appendix VII, xxxiii.

²³ Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar... Kent Indictments, 1649–1659*, 17, 21. Like Boughton, the parish of Bredhurst, near Maidstone, was saddled with an inveterate supporter of Laud and the archbishop's reform programme. In 1641, a number in the parish petitioned for the removal of Richard Tray Snr. In 1643, Tray was the author of a work defending the established church, prayer book, and ceremonies, in which he derided his opponents as 'foolish schismatics' and 'Brownistall Puritans' and, echoing Galatians 3:1, asked 'who hath bewitched them'. One of his supporters in Bredhurst, John Kemsley, may have been the husband of Susan, the accused witch. He may also have been the man of that name presented by the Maidstone churchwardens in 1620 for saying that 'there is no god and that all things come by nature and by Course'; *Wal. Rev.*, 226; Larking (ed.), *Proceedings, Principally in the County of Kent*, 162–71; R. Tray Snr, *The Right Way to Protestantisme* (London, 1643), 21; CCAL, Z.4.1, fo. 187.

²⁴ For Canterbury, see below.

²⁵ Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar... Kent Indictments, 1649–1659*, 118, 119, 123. The parish of High Halden was yet another community beset by religious controversy and division. Following the sequestration of the rector Richard Taylor (c.1586–1651), the living was held by one John Crawford, who, immediately prior to the witchcraft trial of 1652, was involved in disputes with local Baptists and Congregationalists. About the same time, the latter opted to join ranks with the local Baptist church at nearby Staplehurst. One of the victims in 1652, Dorothy Taylor, was the widow of the former rector Richard Taylor. Given that no reasons are specified for Taylor's removal, it is possible that he was sympathetic to the radical cause and that his widow was the same as the Dorothy Tyler who was later listed as a member of Richard Kingsnorth's Baptist congregation at Staplehurst in about 1656: W. H. Rammell, 'Notes on Nineteenth-Century Alterations to High Halden Church; with Extracts from the Parish Books and Registers', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 26 (1904), 318; *Wal. Rev.*, 226; T. Wall, *Tythes No Gospel-Ministers Maintenance Proved: In a Seasonable Answer to Mr John Crauford* (London?, 1653?); Anon., *No Age Like Unto This Age* (London, 1653), 3; CCAL, U37 [Church book of the Canterbury Congregational Church], fo. 15; KHLIC, Howard, 'Church Book of the Smarden Baptists', fo. 1.

²⁶ Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar... Kent Indictments, 1649–1659*, 113, 118. There was a Baptist meeting house at Lenham in 1672. One of the witnesses in the 1652 witchcraft trial, William Weldish, may have been related to the Baptist George Weldish, who gave evidence in another witchcraft trial at nearby Goudhurst in 1657 (see note 19, this chapter): Bate, *Declaration of Indulgence 1672*, Appendix VII, xxxii.

²⁷ For Minster in Thanet, see below, 150.

Orpington (1656),²⁸ and Woodchurch (1657),²⁹ all fit this description. In this respect, the situation in Kent in the 1650s bears striking similarities to that in East Anglia in the 1640s where, as we have seen, there was a marked correlation between witch-hunting and religious polarization and conflict. Like Essex and Suffolk, Kent lay close to the capital, had been highly radicalized by the religious and political developments of the 1630s, and subsequently experienced campaigns of iconoclasm and widespread sequestrations in the early 1640s. So why, given the absence of armed conflict in Kent, did the county not suffer from witch-hunting in the 1640s?

The answer here probably lies in one crucial difference between the two regions. In Kent, the lack of puritan unity—evident, for example, in the weakness of Presbyterianism and the failure of the county's godly elite to establish a Presbyterian system of classes after 1646—probably acted as a deterrent to concerted action against witches in the same way that it failed to provide any form of religious or political consensus with respect to other pressing issues at this time. Unlike Essex and Suffolk, 'the strength of the gathered churches as well as the survival of support for episcopacy' in Kent created a volatile religious situation in which no single group held sway for long and conflict over a variety of theological and ecclesiological issues continually threatened to provoke division in parochial and county government. It was not until 1649 and the events following the second civil war in Kent and the execution of the King that any form of settled government was able to take root in the county. Then, political power was firmly vested in the hands of

²⁸ Orpington was one of the earliest centres of Baptist activity in Kent. There was a settled Baptist ministry here, under the leadership of Francis Cornwell, from about 1645. He was succeeded by Nicholas Cross, an active and diligent minister, who bemoaned the sinfulness of his flock, including some elders, in the mid-1650s. Cross may have been assisted by Captain John Browne, who in 1653 was instrumental in petitioning Cromwell on behalf of the Orpington Baptists in order to influence the nomination of godly men to the Barebones Parliament. Two years later, he again spoke on behalf of 'several Believers in Christ, and especially of many of the Congregation at Orpington', when he published a book, dedicated to Cromwell, commending the current age for its liberty of conscience. He went on to extol his right to preach 'the personall Raign of Christ on Earth'. It is possible that the Richard Browne who witnessed in the witchcraft trial in the following year was related to this figure. The two men may also have been related to Rachel and Edward Browne, associates of Francis Cornwell at Horton Kirby in the 1630s (see above, 79–80). Cross continued to minister to his congregation at Orpington after the Restoration, when he published a pamphlet calling for peace and further moral reform, while rejecting rebellion (citing 1 Samuel 15:23 in the process): F. Cornwell, *Gospel-Repentance Floweth from Faith, and Attendeth a Justified Person All His Dayes* (London, 1645); F. Cornwell, *A Conference Mr John Cotton Held at Boston with the Elders of New England* (London, 1646); F. Cornwell, *Two Queries Worthy of Consideration* (London?, 1646); N. Cross, *A Rule for Ministers and People, whereby they may see how they are Engaged one towards Another, by God's Word* (London, 1654); Nickolls (ed.), *Original Letters and Papers of State*, 96; Capt. J. Browne, *A Brief Survey of the Prophetical and Evangelical Events of the Last Times . . . Being a Portion of the Paines in Searching of the Holy Scriptures by Several of the Members of the Congregation of Orpington in Kent* (London, 1655); TNA, RG/1728 [Church Book of the Bessel's Green Baptists], fos 5r, 5v. Unfortunately, the first membership list for the latter does not begin until 1667.

²⁹ Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar . . . Kent Indictments, 1649–1659*, 268, 270. Woodchurch had become a major site of religious conflict under its Laudian minister Edward Boughen, who was removed in 1641. Boughen was the author of numerous works advocating conformity and obedience, including one in 1638 in which he cited 1 Samuel 15:23, that popular shibboleth of loyal Anglicans, where rebellion was equated with witchcraft: *Wal. Rev.*, 212; *ODNB*, sub Boughen, Edward.

what Peter Clark has described as 'a new set of more committed radicals of lower social standing', many of them members of gathered congregations, who were committed to wholesale reform of Kentish society.³⁰ It was in the period of this group's ascendancy that Kent experienced its version of a Hopkins-style witch hunt, with prosecutions peaking in the early years of the commonwealth. It is equally noticeable that such prosecutions began to decline at about the same time as the fragile consensus between radical and more moderate sections of puritan opinion began to fragment after 1653—a process that gathered pace with the first appearance of the Quakers in Kent and continuing debate in puritan circles over such divisive issues as tithes and a state-salaried ministry.³¹ Sometimes the linkage between these issues and outbreaks of witch-hunting is strikingly evident. The non-payment of tithes, for example, had become a deeply divisive issue in the small parish of Minster in the Isle of Sheppey in 1651, when the uncompromising puritan incumbent Richard Culmer (c.1597–1662) penned the first of a number of attacks on local sectaries who refused to pay their dues. In the same year, two local women were prosecuted at the quarter sessions for witchcraft.³² Elsewhere, disagreements among puritan sectaries and divisions within congregations may have fuelled spiritual anxiety and fostered fears of demonic intrusion. The two cases of witchcraft that arose in the small Wealden village of Benenden in 1652 and 1653 may well have been a by-product of such conflict. Here, the mystical millenarian Simon Henden engaged in a series of debates at this time with local Presbyterians in which he argued that the godly should effect a total separation

³⁰ My analysis of religion and politics in Kent in this period is largely based on two studies: J. Eales, "'So Many Sects and Schisms': Religious Diversity in Revolutionary Kent", in C. Durston and J. Maltby (eds), *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), 226–48 [quote at 239]; and P. Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent 1500–1640* (Hassocks, 1977), esp. 388–96 [quote at 392].

³¹ The weald of Kent and the villages surrounding Cranbrook and Staplehurst lay at the heart of early Quaker missionary activity in the county. In 1655, early Quaker evangelists such as Alexander Parker described large meetings there of Seekers and Baptists, 'where many of the chiefe of severall churches were mett together to make up some rentes and breaches that were amongst them': FHL, MSS 81 [formerly Caton MS 3], fos 275–86.

³² KHL, Q/SB2/32, 35, 41; Q/SB3/4 and 5; R. Culmer Snr, *The Ministers Hue and Cry, or, a True Discovery of the Unsufferable Injuries, Robberies, Cozenages and Oppressions Now Acted Against Ministers and Impropriators* (London, 1651). The pre- and post-civil war history of Minster echoes that of so many of the East Anglian parishes afflicted by witchcraft in the mid-1640s. Culmer, who arrived as rector in 1645, had to face the dual threat posed by loyal conformists and supporters of the sequestered minister Meric Casaubon (1599–1671) and that of discontented radicals eager to overturn any form of settled, national ministry. With regard to the former, Culmer's son, also Richard, referred to them in 1657 as 'vassals' of the Devil, who like the possessed man, required casting out of the kingdom. Culmer himself clearly polarized opinion in the village. As an indefatigable proponent of puritan moral reform, he acquired a formidable local reputation as an uncompromising advocate of iconoclasm (in December 1643 he famously set about destroying images in Canterbury Cathedral, and then repeated the performance at Minster) and strict observance of the sabbath. He nonetheless alienated more radical elements within the parish, many of whom were travelling up to twenty miles to attend gathered churches by the late 1650s. Culmer himself was swiftly ejected at the Restoration, when Casaubon (who later published in support of witchcraft) was briefly reinstated: Eales, "'So Many Sects'", 237–8; Larking (ed.), *Proceedings, Principally in the County of Kent*, 105–6; R. Culmer Jnr, *A Parish Looking-Glasse for Persecutors of Ministers* (London, 1657), 24, 26, 33; Anon., *Culmer's Crown Crackt with His Own Looking Glass* (London?, 1657); *Wal. Rev.*, 213.

from ‘those defiled women and false reformed churches’. An opponent of all external ordinances, Henden was nonetheless reluctant to dismiss his opponents as altogether without some strain of godliness. At the same time, he was quick to resort to the language of witchcraft, citing 1 Samuel 15:23 in order to chastise those spiritual apostates who ‘erect Gospel-tabernacles and Churches without a call and spiriting from heaven’.³³

Religious conflict in interregnum Kent generated fear, anxiety, and uncertainty, which in turn prompted those among the godly to suspect that the Devil and his minions were active in their communities. More often than not, suspicions of witchcraft tended to be directed against external threats, principally individuals who belonged to rival churches or congregations. Occasionally, however, the Devil was found closer to home. At Canterbury, for example, Susan Godfrey, a member of the Congregational church in the city overseen by John Durant (1620–1689), was admonished in 1652 for ‘going unto witches to enquire about a husband’. Other aspects of her behaviour were giving equal cause for concern, particularly her disorderly behaviour and tendency to speak irreverently of church officers.³⁴ The mild censure of Susan Godfrey suggests an additional factor that may have impinged on attitudes to witchcraft among the various gathered churches at this time. The failure of the elders to resort to excommunication in this case was in all likelihood prompted by interdenominational rivalries and the fear of defection. During the course of the 1650s, the search for spiritual truth and certainty encouraged religious experimentation and fragmentation, with men and women frequently moving between competing groups. The tensions generated by such acts of religious apostasy ran highest among the recently formed gathered churches and were frequently expressed in demonic terms. The Baptists in particular would appear to have been susceptible to the allure of such language, which, on occasion, might lead to actual accusations of witchcraft. In Cambridgeshire in 1659, for example, a Quaker widow was tried for the crime of witchcraft, partly at the instigation of local Baptists, including John Bunyan (1628–1688), who accused the woman of riding to a witches’ sabbat.³⁵ Occasionally, members fell prey to the

³³ Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar... Kent Indictments, 1649–1659*, 122, 135; KHL, Q/SB4/3–5, 52–5; S. Henden, *The Key of Scripture-Prophecies: Or, A Glass of Some New Discoveries. Being an Answer to a Book Published by John Elimestone* (London?, 1652), 87 and *passim*. Peter Clark misleadingly refers to Henden as a ‘Ranter’. There is no evidence, however, that he engaged in Ranter-like activity or behaviour. Seemingly more interested in intellectual and spiritual sparring, in June 1658 he initiated a new debate with the Baptist leader George Hammon at his house at Benenden: Clark, *English Provincial Society*, 178; G. Hammon, *Truth and Innocency, Prevailing Against Error and Insolency... A Second Part... It being an Answer to one Mr Simon Henden of Benenden in Kent* (London, 1660).

³⁴ CCAL, U37, sub 20 September 1652. The case is discussed in M. V. Jones, ‘The Divine Durant: A Seventeenth-Century Independent’, *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 83 (1968), 197. Fears of witchcraft were clearly prevalent in Canterbury at this time. The case of Susan Godfrey came hot on the heels of two recent prosecutions for witchcraft in the city in the previous year: KHL, Q/SB2/13, 89.

³⁵ Anon., *Strange and Terrible Newes from Cambridge Being a True Relation of the Quakers Bewitching of Mary Philips* (London, 1659); J. Blackley et al., *A Lying Wonder Discovered, and the Strange and Terrible Newes from Cambridge Proved False* (London, 1659); *The Loyall Scout* [22–29 July 1659], 105–6. For Bunyan’s authorship of a pamphlet on this case, no longer extant, see Blackley et al., *A Lying Wonder Discovered*, 4, 7.

malign attention of witches. Such tribulations provided important opportunities for the whole congregation to engage in ritual acts of fasting and prayer, and in the process affirm the divine nature of the Baptist dispensation.³⁶ More often than not, however, the demonological tensions generated by interdenominational feuding were restricted to oral and printed debates in which the spiritual stubbornness of rivals was described in demonic terms. In 1655, for example, following a confrontation between the Baptists and Quakers at New Romney in Kent, the Baptist leader George Hammon, on hearing the news of the recent conversion of Samuel Fisher (1604–1665) to Quakerism, wryly commented that ‘Our brother Fisher is bewitched also.’³⁷

In the same year that Hammon engaged in debate with Fisher, he was also involved in an equally fierce controversy with Matthias Rutton, minister at Boughton Monchelsea, who had accused him of being one of ‘the Messengers of Satan’. Hammon responded in print, and used the opportunity to add an appendix infused with millenarian language and dire warnings against those who practised ‘magicke Art’ and ‘love to be in King’s Courts, as Pharaoh’s Magicians did’. The activities of such wise men were a sure sign of the imminence of the millennium, when Antichrist and all his false prophets were to be ‘cast into the Lake that burneth with fire and brimston’. Likewise, the recent appearance of the ‘rude Ranters, and the blasphemous Quakers’ provided additional evidence for Hammon of the general iniquity of the times and a token of impending doom for all sinners.³⁸ Hammon’s predicament in facing critics like Rutton and Fisher was, I would suggest, typical of many of that new generation of radicals who sought power and respectability in the confused circumstances of the interregnum. It may also help to explain why allegations of witchcraft, some of which ended in formal trials, increasingly emanated from Hammon’s colleagues in the gathered churches of Kent. Hammon and others like him occupied a precarious middle ground. From one side, they were stigmatized by their more orthodox opponents as ‘anti-magisterial and anti-ministerial’ extremists, who wished to dispense with tithes and turn the world upside down. From the other, they were viewed as not radical enough, and were continually accused of heavy-handedness and intolerance by fellow radicals with whom they fell out over a wide range of issues relating to religious worship and belief. The leaders of these churches clearly craved social, religious, and political respectability, many insisting, despite the best efforts of their detractors, that they remained committed to upholding the sanctity of law and order in the civil polity. At the same time, they were committed to the principle of

³⁶ See, for example, E. B. Underhill (ed.), *The Records of a Church of Christ Meeting in Broadmead, Bristol, 1640–87* (London, Hanserd Knollys Soc., 1847), 194.

³⁷ W. C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (London, 1923), 396.

³⁸ G. Hammon, *A Discovery of the Latitude of the Loss of the Earthly Paradise by Original Sin. Occasioned by a Disputation betwixt Mr. Matthias Rutton, Minister of Boughton Monchelsea* (London, 1655), 105, 166. Hammon’s attempt to steer a middle path between a national church and religious extremism is also evident in his subsequent attack on the ministry of Hezekiah Holland at Sutton Valence and his attempt to convince radicals such as Richard Coppin and Simon Henden of the error of their ways: Hammon, *Truth and Innocency*; R. Coppin, *A Blow at the Serpent* (London, 1656), 7.

self-government in religious matters, which they believed was enshrined in the constitutional changes initiated by the Cromwellian state. The identification and prosecution of witches by the members of such congregations thus served two useful functions. On the one hand it enabled the gathered churches, almost all of whom subscribed to some form of covenant-taking as a formal token of membership, to reaffirm those values and beliefs that lay at the core of their identity and in stark contrast to those of their 'antichristian' neighbours and opponents.³⁹ At the same time, in promoting legal action against witches the members of such churches acknowledged the legitimacy of the Cromwellian state, upon which they depended for their own survival.

Interneccine conflict between the sects and other religious groups thus bred fear and concern about witchcraft, which might, under exceptional circumstances, lead to a formal accusation and trial. Occasionally, as we have seen, the accused were drawn from rival churches. More often than not, however, the impulse to identify and prosecute witches probably emanated from a desire to promote and enhance religious concord among the sects by focusing godly ire on the figure of the demonic witch. Typical was John Durant, the Canterbury Congregationalist, who in 1653 bemoaned the disintegration of the puritan 'left' in Kent while simultaneously subscribing to the view that the Devil was active in their midst, conducting 'invisible transactions' through his 'slaves', such as those soothsayers who predict future events.⁴⁰ The eirenic potential of witchcraft, and the role it played in England after the Restoration, is discussed more fully in Chapter 5. Here, however, it is worth pondering again the 'therapeutic' role that witchcraft played in radical sectarian circles in the 1640s and 1650s, echoing the healing or purgative qualities that many mainstream puritans invoked in the discovery and punishment of witches in East Anglia in the 1640s. If anything, the therapeutic potential of witch-hunting possessed even greater appeal for the radical wing of the puritan movement given the emphasis that many of their number placed upon the gift of healing as the mark of a true Church. This was particularly evident in the case of the early Baptists, many of whom rejected conventional medicine in favour of charismatic healing by laying-on of hands or the use of prayer and oil. Such methods, moreover, were often employed by Baptist ministers in the cure of the possessed and bewitched. Through such means, like their puritan forbears half a century earlier, they hoped to emulate the practice of the apostolic Church and in the

³⁹ For the early Baptists' predilection for covenanting, which has been likened to the 'boundary-identifying function of discipline' explored by Millard Erickson, see T. Dowley, 'The History of the English Baptists during the Great Persecution, 1660–1688', PhD thesis (Manchester, 1976), 104n and T. Dowley, 'Baptists and Discipline in the Seventeenth Century', *Baptist Quarterly*, 24 (1971), 157–66.

⁴⁰ J. Durant, *The Salvation of the Saints* (London, 1653), 91. Durant may have had in mind the case of Susan Godfrey above. Such views were common among the more radical puritan sects. In 1664, for example, a member of the Baptist church at Canterbury was found guilty of, among other things, maintaining that 'Astrologie was lawfull for Christians to practice': DWL, MS 38.81 GB11 [General Baptist Church Book, Canterbury, 1663–1695], 6. For another example of a Kentish radical condemning astrology, see Browne, *Brief Survey of the Prophetical and Evangelical Events of the Last Times*, 18.

process convince others of the righteousness of their cause. Unfortunately for groups such as the Baptists, religious fragmentation and bitter backbiting undermined such efforts and gave way in the 1650s to a form of spiritual anarchy in which accusations, and counter-accusations, of witch-like behaviour became the norm in interdenominational feuding.

Developments elsewhere in England in the 1650s broadly mirror those in Kent. Witchcraft, as both a concept and a crime, was becoming inextricably linked in the minds of both the wider public and the ruling elites with the religious and political conflicts of the period. Political opponents routinely castigated each other by recourse to demonological language. At the same time, formal accusations of witchcraft were often tainted by partisanship. The burgeoning market for pamphlets and newsletters in the 1650s provided an important outlet for the former and probably encouraged people to think of politics in demonic terms. Rather than creating such attitudes, however, the popular press almost certainly reflected public opinion in this instance. The tendency to depict Cromwell, for example, as a witch and an agent of the Devil probably owed as much to the prejudices of ordinary men and women on the streets of interregnum England as it did to the efforts of official propagandists for the Stuart cause. The claim of one exasperated royalist spy in 1657, who argued that the only way the Lord Protector 'came by hearing of all things contrived against him . . . was by witchcraft or familiarity with the Devil', would appear to pre-date published attacks portraying Cromwell as a witch.⁴¹ Likewise, the common resort of contemporaries to the language of witchcraft in order to demonize opponents was not restricted to the editors of the popular press in London. In the autumn of 1650, for example, Matthew Purkis, a radical Fifth Monarchist, was prosecuted in the borough court of Exeter for deriding the Presbyterian minister Thomas Ford as 'a witch and a rebel' and 'a wizard and a lyar'.⁴² Trials for witchcraft in this period were equally vulnerable to political manipulation and comment. The trial of Anne Bodenham at Salisbury in March 1653, in which the memory of the duke of Buckingham's wizard, John Lambe, was hijacked by puritan activists in the city, provides an interesting case in point.⁴³ It

⁴¹ *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Esq.*, ed. T. Birch, 7 vols (London, 1742), vi, 569–70. For later attempts to denigrate Cromwell and his regicide confederates as witches and servants of the Devil, see [J. Heath], *Flagellum: Or the Life and Death . . . of Oliver Cromwell the Late Usurper* (London, 1663); Anon., *The English Devil: or, Cromwel and his Monstrous Witch Discover'd at White-Hall* (London, 1660); D. Holles, *Memoirs of Denzil Lord Holles . . . 1641 to 1648* (London, 1699), xiv–xv; cf. the preacher Samuel Stone, who in 1661 compared the regicides to those witches mentioned in Isaiah 8:19 that 'peep and mutter . . . the spirits of witches, and wizards, with whom it may be doubted that these spirit-people are too familiar': [S. Stone], *Deceivers Deceiv'd: Or, The Mistakes of Wickednes* [St Paul's Cathedral, London, 20 October 1661] (London, 1661), 27–8.

⁴² DRO, ECA/C1/64, fo. 163r. Purkis was a belligerent and outspoken radical who was frequently in trouble with the puritan authorities in the 1650s for his unorthodox religious opinions and contemptuous attitude toward those in authority: see *ibid.*, fos 165v–166r, 172v, 173r, 180r, 428v, 435v–436r.

⁴³ M. Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, Politics, and Memory in Seventeenth-Century England', *Historical Journal*, 50 (2007), 289–308. Memories of Lambe were also invoked by the radical regicide and judge John Cook in the 1650s who cited flaws in a case brought against the infamous conjuror, subsequently released on a technicality, as an argument in favour of fundamental reform of the law: Bodl., Rawlinson MS A 189 ['A Commentary on the Legal System'], fos 389r–v.

also attracted the interest of the popular press. There is little doubt that the reference in a pro-royalist newspaper in February 1653 to a great gathering of 173,000 witches ‘in the likeness of great Catts’ on Salisbury Plain’ was intended as a satirical reflection on the imminent trial of Anne Bodenham, who, in the eyes of her detractors, represented the discredited regime of Charles I.⁴⁴ Salisbury, like so many corporate towns in interregnum England, was deeply divided on issues of religion. Similar conflicts probably fuelled alleged incidents of witchcraft in other communities at this time. The London suburbs of Stepney, Wapping, and Whitechapel, for example, which were renowned for harbouring radicals and extremists, were also the locations of numerous witch trials in this period.⁴⁵ Some clearly owed their genesis to religious tensions. In the summer of 1653, the children of Peter Gale, a leader of the Independent faction in Whitechapel who had helped wrestle control of the parish away from the Presbyterians in 1647, were struck down by a mysterious illness widely imputed to the malevolence of a local woman named Elizabeth Newman. Newspaper accounts allege that she resorted to witchcraft in order to gain revenge on Gale, who as captain of the Tower Hamlets trained band was responsible for impressing her husband. Initially found not guilty of the crime, she was subsequently retried and executed, her fate in all likelihood determined by the religious and political prominence of her victim, a local lay preacher and loyal Cromwellian.⁴⁶ Four years later it was the turn of a Presbyterian minister in the bitterly divided parish of Wapping to make religious capital from a suspected case of diabolical witchcraft. The witch in question, Lydia Rogers, was reported to be formerly of a godly disposition, ‘professing Religion in the purity thereof’, until she ‘fel afterwards to be a Sectary, and then to be acquainted with Astrologers, and afterwards with the Devil himself’.⁴⁷ In her despair she confessed

⁴⁴ *Mercurius Democritus*, 341 [2–9 February 1653]. The allusion to Bodenham is further suggested by the fact that it was widely alleged that she kept a cat as a familiar, engaged in lycanthropy, and was able by her charms to ‘send either man or woman 40 miles an hour in the ayr’: *Doctor Lambs Darling; or, Strange and Terrible News from Salisbury* (London, 1653). For John Crouch, the author of *Mercurius Democritus* and inveterate opponent of the Cromwellian regime, see *ODNB*.

⁴⁵ Witches were discovered at Stepney in 1651, 1653, 1657, and 1659. In the summer of 1645, an anonymous pamphlet reporting the first trials in East Anglia claimed that there had been ‘a discovery of witches’ at Stepney, many of whom were ‘persons of eminence’: J. C. Jeaffreson (ed.), *Middlesex County Records*, 4 vols (London, Middlesex County Rec. Soc., 1888–92), iii, 202, 216, 266, 278, 285, 295, 299; Anon., *Signes and Wonders from Heaven* (London, 1645), 2–3. For Wapping (1652, 1658) and Whitechapel (1652, 1653–54, 1656), see Jeaffreson (ed.), *Middlesex County Records*, iii, 208, 217–18, 223–4, 287, 288, 289, 293; Anon., *The Witch of Wapping* (London, 1652); Anon., *A Declaration in Answer to Several Lying Pamphlets Concerning the Witch of Wapping* (London, 1652). The case at Wapping in 1658 is described in more detail below.

⁴⁶ Jeaffreson (ed.), *Middlesex County Records*, iii, 217–18, 289; *The Grand Politique Post*, 1256–7 [17–24 January 1654] [where the witch is erroneously referred to as Elizabeth Wenman]; *The Weekly Intelligencer*, 135–6 [17–24 January 1654]; K. Lindley, ‘Whitechapel Independents and the English Revolution’, *Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), 283–6. The news reports also suggest a religious motive for the original accusation in that they both agree that Newman was seeking admission to a ‘gathered church’ at the time, but was refused admission because she was widely suspected to be a witch.

⁴⁷ This case spawned two pamphlets, both of which would appear to be indebted to the same source: Anon., *The Snare of the Devill Discovered: Or, A True and Perfect Relation of the Sad and Deplorable Condition of Lydia the Wife of John Rogers . . . [of] Wapping* (London, 1658); Anon., *A More Exact Relation of the Most Lamentable and Horrid Contract which Lydia Rogers . . . Made with the Divil*

all to the local minister John Johnson, who consequently led his congregation in prayers in the hope of reclaiming Lydia from the snares of the Devil and alleviating her diabolical fits.⁴⁸

Elizabeth Newman's fate coincided with a period of intense speculation and religious disquiet surrounding the calling of the Barebones Parliament, in which some radical members were seeking to abolish tithes and dismantle the state's sponsorship of the Church. Contrary to what one might expect, such men were capable of advocating belief in witchcraft and the punishment of witches. In 1652, John Rowland, former soldier in Scotland and radical associate of the medical reformer Nicholas Culpeper (1616–1654), petitioned Cromwell, claiming to have knowledge of a magic lecture in London where sacrifices to the Devil were undertaken. In the same breath, he lobbied the Protector to erect a liberty for tender consciences in the upcoming Parliament.⁴⁹ Such concerns may have encouraged witch-hunting elsewhere in England at this time. In addition to the witch scare in Kent, already discussed, Cornwall too experienced a major witch scare in January 1654, when it was reported that over twenty-five witches had been secured and incarcerated, eight of whom were condemned at the spring assizes.⁵⁰ News of cases such as these were widely disseminated in the popular press, where the tone of the reporting was singularly credulous and sympathetic to the victims. This was in marked contrast with the attitude taken elsewhere in similar publications with regard to incidents of witch-hunting in Scotland, where once again a

(London, 1658). The former suggests that Rogers had become a member of an 'Anabaptical Church', i.e. one of the many Baptist congregations located in this part of the suburbs of east London. It also adds the detail that she consulted an astrologer named Master Blacklock, possibly the army surgeon Samuel Blacklock, a former associate of John Lilburne and William Walwyn and founder of a particular Baptist church in London in 1642 before becoming a Seeker in the 1650s; Anon., *Snare of the Devill Discovered*, 3; W. Haller and G. Davies (eds), *The Leveller Tracts 1647–1653* (Gloucester, MA, 1964), 424; M. Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints: The Separate Churches of London, 1616–1649* (Cambridge, 1977), 26, 180; TNA, SP 28/41/1, fo. 56.

⁴⁸ Despite his subsequent support for the Restoration and dread of sectarian anarchy, Johnson nonetheless suffered the same fate as so many of his co-religionists when he was ejected in 1662: Anon., *Snare of the Devill Discovered*, 2; *Cal. Rev.*, 299; C. L. Falkiner, 'Some Letters of Toby and James Bonnell', *English Historical Review*, 73 (1904), 125–6 [Toby Bonnell to John Johnson, 16 May 1660].

⁴⁹ W. Rowland, *Judicial Astrologie Judicially Condemned* (London, 1651); *CSPD, 1652–1653*, 69. A number of Fifth Monarchist saints defended the death penalty in cases of witchcraft: B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism* (London, 1972), 187.

⁵⁰ *Mercurius Politicus*, 3005–6, 3186 [23 November 1653; 2 January 1654]; R. Vilvain, *Theoremata Theologica: Theological Treatises* (London, 1654), 293a–b. Vilvain (1576–1663), an elderly physician from Exeter, was an Anglican who nonetheless advocated religious moderation and clearly welcomed the Protectorate and subsequent suppression of the radicals in Barebones. He cited the Cornish witches, and the role of Sergeant John Glynne (1603–1666) in condemning the same, in a section of his treatise designed to refute Hobbesians and others who rejected the reality of Hell, the Devil, and witchcraft. Vilvain may well have colluded with the Cromwellian authorities in Exeter in the 1650s, where, among other things, he endowed a library in the refurbished cathedral, and may have suffered for the same at the Restoration. In 1662, the King wrote to the dean and chapter of the cathedral confirming that Vilvain's lease of church property should not be renewed on account of his 'ill carriage in the late distractions': *ibid.*, b3r–b4r; 219a–b, 231–2, 239a; *CSPD, 1661–1662*, 495, 496; *ODNB*, sub Vilvain, Robert [which fails to mention his authorship of *Theoremata Theologica*]. As an Oxford fellow and medical student, Vilvain had verified the fits of Anne Gunter before the Court of Star Chamber in 1606; see above, 50n.

political imperative would appear to have informed the apparent ‘scepticism’ of the newswriters. From 1649 onwards, loyal Cromwellian journalists repeatedly depicted Scotland under Presbyterian rule as a country infested with supposed witches, where thousands were put to death as a result of ‘their Clergies cruel Tyranny’ and other forms of ‘Amboyna usage’.⁵¹ It was not until the arrival of the moderate, sceptical, and enlightened English that the Scots were released from such tyranny and the country ‘unwitched’.⁵² The tone of this reporting could not be more different from that employed in cases of domestic witchcraft, and suggests once again the extent to which witchcraft by the 1650s had become enmeshed in political debate. The self-evident barbarism of the Scots, combined with their support for Charles Stuart and preference for Presbyterianism, ensured that in the eyes of ‘official’ commentators they were a people ripe for Cromwellian conquest and reform. Scottish witches were thus a figment of the Presbyterian imagination, and were widely depicted as such in order to denigrate those who continued to oppose the Cromwellian annexation of Scotland.

Historians have perhaps too readily accepted at face value the idea that English rule in Scotland in the 1650s was characterized by a form of enlightened tolerance that led to a decline in witch-hunting.⁵³ Fears of witchcraft persisted among those chosen to oversee the government of the northern kingdom, as is evident from the private journals kept by important figures in the Cromwellian administration of Scotland such as Roger Boyle, Lord Broghill (1621–1679).⁵⁴ It is also noteworthy that informed commentators such as Bulstrode Whitlocke (1605–1675), who noted disdainfully the methods used by the Scottish kirk in eliciting confessions from witches in 1652, were more than willing to suspend their disbelief when confronted with reports of the malign activities of English witches.⁵⁵ Furthermore, by the end of the 1650s and the period of English occupation, witch-hunting was

⁵¹ See, for example, *The Moderate*, 591 [26 June–3 July 1649]; *Mercurius Politicus*, 87 [4–11 July 1650], 1121 [2–9 October 1651], 1285 [11–18 December 1651], 1982–3 [21–28 October 1652]; *Severall Proceedings in Parliament*, 2537–8 [28 October–4 November 1652].

⁵² *Mercurius Politicus*, 1993–4 [4–11 November 1652].

⁵³ Christina Lerner was the first to observe that ‘English good sense prevailed over Scottish superstition’ in the 1650s, echoing the observation of earlier historians such as Keith Thomas with regard to the decline of witchcraft prosecutions in Scotland in this period: C. Lerner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (London, 1981), 75, 119; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971), 501. For a more nuanced reading of the role played by the English in Scottish witch trials in the 1650s, see B. P. Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics and Religion* (New York, 2008), 63–4. It is also worth stressing that the origins of the ‘witch panic’ in Scotland in 1649–50 very closely mirrored those which, I have argued above, helped to provide a breeding ground for witch-hunting in north-east England at about the same time (and with the collusion of a Scottish witchpricker). According to Paula Hughes, ‘what happened in 1649–50 was a culmination of ten years of dominance of political and religious life by Presbyterian radicals with apocalyptic visions and an impending sense that the nation’s troubles resulted from the scourge of the ungodly threatening to subvert a covenanted and godly nation’: P. Hughes, ‘Witch-Hunting in Scotland 1649–1650’, in J. Goodare (ed.), *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunters* (Basingstoke, 2013), 85–102 [quote at 87].

⁵⁴ P. Elmer, *The Miraculous Conformist: Valentine Greatrakes, the Body Politic, and the Politics of Healing in Restoration Britain* (Oxford, 2013), 133.

⁵⁵ B. Whitlocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs from the Beginning of the Reign of Charles the First to the Happy Restoration of King Charles the Second*, 4 vols (Oxford, 1853), iii, 465; iv, 51. The latter case almost certainly alludes to the witches discovered in Cornwall in late 1653 (see note 50, this chapter).

again on the increase. The Quaker George Fox noted ruefully the massed crowds that attended the burning of a witch at Edinburgh in 1657, a spectacle that became increasingly familiar thereafter when over forty people were executed for witchcraft in the period immediately prior to the Restoration.⁵⁶ It would be difficult to conclude from these and other developments in the 1650s that belief in witchcraft and the punishment of witches was in terminal decline. On the other hand, it was undoubtedly the case that growing awareness of the political ends to which accusations of witchcraft might be put was responsible for encouraging renewed speculation as to the nature and reality of witchcraft, as traditionally conceived. This process was most apparent among those alienated groups and intellectuals who had most to lose from the continuation of Cromwellian rule, in particular Presbyterians and royalists (often one and the same after 1649), from whose ranks two of the most important contributions to the sceptical position with respect to witchcraft were to emerge in the 1650s.

THE POLITICS OF INTERREGNUM SCEPTICISM: ROBERT FILMER AND THOMAS ADY

There can be little doubt that the emergence of radical sectarianism in the 1640s, followed by the ascendancy of the Independents amid a limited form of religious toleration in the following decade, encouraged many Presbyterians to rethink the nature of the threat posed to godly society by the Devil and his various accomplices. Increasingly, from the late 1640s onwards, Presbyterians began to minimize the threat posed by demonic witches and to focus instead on a new enemy, the diabolical sectarian or extremist, who threatened to destroy all social, religious, and political order. In all probability it was this kind of thinking that motivated the clergyman John Gaule (d.1687) to oppose Hopkins and his associates in Huntingdonshire in 1646. Initially supportive of the war, by the time of the witch trials Gaule, a religious and social conservative, was becoming increasingly fearful of the gradual slide in the country toward political and spiritual anarchy. In Gaule's eyes, the witchfinders were no better than sectaries, undermining order and propriety through their assumption of spiritual authority in condemning innocent men and women. In an assize sermon of 1648 he promulgated a vision of a unified, Christian body politic with Christ at its head and the elect as its members, but in the years that followed he found himself increasingly at odds with the new order. At the Restoration, which, in line with many Presbyterians, he enthusiastically welcomed, Gaule claimed to have opposed the legality of the war against the King

For earlier examples of Whitlocke's 'credulity', see *ibid.*, iii, 128 [witch pricker at Newcastle, 1649], 221 [witchcraft at Boston, New England, 1650].

⁵⁶ J. L. Nickalls (ed.), *The Journal of George Fox: A Revised Edition* (Cambridge, 1952), 320–1; Larnier, *Enemies of God*, 75. For the upsurge of witch trials in Scotland in 1657–59, see Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 64–6. Levack is surely correct in identifying religious fervour and godly zeal for moral reform as a major shared factor in the general rise of witch-hunting in England and Scotland in the period from 1640 to 1660: *ibid.*, 55–80.

from its inception and to have suffered all manner of embarrassing repercussions as a result, including imprisonment and the threat of a firing squad.⁵⁷ Witch-hunting for men like Gaule had thus become a distraction, which had encouraged the disintegration of the Church and destabilized the body politic. Similar thinking is evident in the work of fellow Presbyterian Charles Herle (d.1659), who warned his readers in 1655 that the Devil had changed tack in his war against mankind, now recruiting religious zealots and radical incendiaries rather than harmless old women. He thus inveighed against those who were fearful of everything, citing the example of credulous onlookers who had once believed that Prince Rupert's dog had the features of 'an enchanted Camp-lady' and from thence had concluded that 'all old women [were] Witches'. At the same time, he counselled continuing vigilance, refocusing attention on the new challenge posed to mankind by a Devil renowned for his cunning and guile:

And yet it cannot be denied but that the Devil is still both as crafty and busie as ever, and being now (by the light of the Gospel) beaten out of his old holds of Idolatry, Superstition, and open prophanesne; he is sure to suite his temptations to the times, and to make use of the present professed light, and under the credit of it to passe off his false lights for company . . . If he can make use of an indiscreet zeal, eminence of profession, or contempt of the world, to the reproach of those three his old sworne enemies Magistracy, Ministry, & Scripture, he were not himself, nor Devil enough for his owne time, if he did not gild and lap his Pills in this kinde of Sugar.⁵⁸

In practical terms, the widespread appeal of such thinking may have encouraged a growing scepticism in the ranks of some moderate puritans, including those Presbyterian ministers and magistrates who clung on to office during the interregnum. This is evident, for example, in the diary of the Essex minister Ralph Josselin (1617–1683), who noted only two cases of witchcraft during his long pastorate at Earls Colne. In the first incident, in August 1656, he was convinced of the innocence of a local woman 'clamoured on as a witch', and subsequently sought to ensure that such doubts were made known to the local magistrate investigating the case. A year later, he ruminated on the fears expressed by a neighbouring minister with regard to the suspicious activities of another local woman, rumoured to be a witch, but having spoken to the suspect he rejected any further course of action.⁵⁹ If Josselin was disinclined to pursue such claims, it may have reflected the

⁵⁷ M. Gaskill, *Witchfinders: A Seventeenth-Century Tragedy* (London, 2005), 221–2; J. Gaule, *A Sermon of the Saints Judging the World. Preached at the Assizes Holden in Huntingdon* [13 March 1648/9] (London, 1649); J. Gaule, *An Admonition Moving to Moderation* (London, 1660); *CSPD*, 1660–1661, 345–6. In line with other Presbyterian critics of astrology, magic, witchcraft, and other forms of divination and prophecy, Gaule was responsible for further attacks on these 'false sciences' in 1652 and 1657.

⁵⁸ C. Herle, *Worldly Policy, and Moral Prudence the Vanity and Folly of the One, the Solidity and Usefulness of the Other: in a Moral Discourse* (London, 1654), i, 25–6; ii, 122–3. Like Gaule, Herle, who had formerly played a prominent role in London as a preacher and adviser to Parliament in the 1640s, changed tack after the execution of Charles I in 1649. In 1651 he was arrested in the aftermath of the Battle of Worcester, and shortly after his release he seems to have withdrawn from active engagement in politics and retired to his native Lancashire: *ODNB*, sub Herle, Charles.

⁵⁹ A. Macfarlane (ed.), *The Diary of Ralph Josselin 1616–1683* (London, 1976), 379, 404.

fact that at the time of both incidents he was fully preoccupied with what he clearly perceived as a greater threat to the peace of his neighbourhood and ministry, the emergence of the Quakers. Josselin's diary is replete with allusions to the Quakers, who instilled a strange mixture of fear, anxiety, and loathing in the clergyman. Typical is the entry for 9 April 1656, where he refers to reports of the fits of Quakers at Coggeshall as 'like the pow wowing among the Indies', or a form of diabolical possession. Such thinking was to become commonplace among Josselin's clerical colleagues and, as suggested above, may well have inclined others among the orthodox godly to perceive sects like the early Quakers as taking the place of conventional witches.⁶⁰ In particular, the emergence of the Quakers and other radical groups was a particularly urgent problem for those moderate puritans who held magisterial office in this period. If, as I argue here and elsewhere, the demonizing of these sects did undermine the fears of the godly for the traditional figure of the witch, one might expect to see such a change impacting upon the outlook of those puritan magistrates faced with accusations of witchcraft. But was there a mood of growing scepticism and leniency toward witches among such men in this period? In order to answer this question, far more work needs to be done in examining the religious and political backgrounds of those charged with investigating such crimes during the interregnum. Some tantalizing examples nonetheless survive that suggest there may have been a growing reluctance among moderate or mainstream puritan magistrates to pursue and punish witches. In 1656, for example, Robert Beake, mayor of godly Coventry and a leading figure in the Presbyterian movement in the city, refused to countenance claims of witchcraft in a dispute between two women, advising them instead 'to be friends or to bring better proove of the words'.⁶¹ Equally intriguing is the case of the Hertfordshire Presbyterian and physician Dr John King (1604–1688), who sat on the county bench from 1645 until 1660.⁶² In the winter of 1651–52, various charges were levelled against King including that in his role as a JP he had refused to commit to prison two witches brought before him, despite the fact that both had 'confessed

⁶⁰ Ibid., 366. Elsewhere Macfarlane has written that 'of all the separatists who troubled him . . . it was the Quakers who undoubtedly worried Josselin most': A. Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a Seventeenth-Century Clergyman: An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1970), 26.

⁶¹ L. Fox (ed.), 'Diary of Robert Beake, Mayor of Coventry, 1655–1656', in R. Bearman (ed.), *Miscellany I* (Oxford, Dugdale Soc., 31, 1977), 134.

⁶² Dr John King of Hertfordshire and London is frequently confused with the Huguenot physician of the same name (1614–1681), who practised in London. Both men were medical graduates of Leiden. King had served on various parliamentary commissions from 1643 onwards and was a member of the Eastern Association. He may also have served the parliamentary armies in the early stages of the civil war: R. W. Innes Smith, *English-Speaking Students of Medicine at the University of Leyden* (Edinburgh, 1932), 133; Firth and Rait, i, 119, 170, 231, 243, 289, 294, 539, 622, 638, 639, 745, 967, 1084, 1238; ii, 35, 36, 300, 468, 665, 1070, 1325, 1370, 1371, 1432; A. Kingston, *East Anglia and the Great Civil War* (London, 1897), 386; TNA, SP 28/144/10, fo. 2a. For King's active service as a JP, see W. Le Hardy (ed.), *Hertfordshire County Records. Calendar to the Sessions Books and Sessions Minute Books . . . 1619 to 1657* (Hertford, 1928), 376, 397, 418, 419, 426, 479; W. Le Hardy (ed.), *Hertfordshire County Records. Calendar to the Sessions Books and Sessions Minute Books . . . 1658 to 1700* (Hertford, 1930), 525. In May 1651 he was reprimanded by the council of state for failing to act against seditious meetings at Hitcham, a further example of his lack of sympathy for the Rump: CSPD, 1651, 185.

their fact' and were subsequently hanged 'upon the same evidence'. The charges against King were undoubtedly motivated by local political animosities, and provide further evidence of the tendency for accusations of witchcraft to provide a convenient vehicle for the continuation of inter-confessional disputes and the settling of old political scores. The prime concern of King's detractors, led by the loyal Cromwellian and radical Colonel Alban Cox, was to remove King from the bench for his outspoken opposition to the current government and partisan support for a host of enemies to the regime, including former royalists. He was also castigated for his religious conservatism in seeking to exclude some parishioners from communion in the parish church at St Albans.⁶³ King ultimately weathered the storm and remained in office until the Restoration. During the same period, only one further case of witchcraft was heard at the Hertfordshire assizes (in 1658).

The extent to which examples such as these might be cited as evidence of full-blown scepticism with regard to witchcraft is, of course, open to question. It is nonetheless the case that the 1650s did witness the re-emergence of a sceptical, literary tradition with the publication of two works by authors who, it would appear, were decidedly ill at ease with the religious and political settlements of the 1650s. First, in 1653, appeared Sir Robert Filmer's response to the series of trials held at Maidstone in the previous year, followed three years later by the work of the Essex physician Thomas Ady, whose *Candle in the Dark* was reissued under a new title after the Restoration. The two publications have much in common. Both, for example, were addressed specifically to those charged with trying the crime of witchcraft and both attempted to focus the reader's attention upon issues of definition, arguing, on scriptural grounds, for a reappraisal of what it meant to talk of witches and witchcraft. At the same time, both were keen to depict English laws on witchcraft as a form of Catholic conspiracy hatched by that 'grand Witch' the Pope and carried on by his emissaries, the Jesuits, who are revealed as the true witches or deceivers of the state and its lawmakers.⁶⁴ Sir Robert Filmer (d.1653), of course, had every reason to criticize and oppose the radical regimes of the early 1650s, particularly in his native Kent, where, as I have tried to show, the impetus to convict in the trials of this period arose from among the gathered congregations and their lay supporters in the reformed magistracy. These were the new men or

⁶³ Wellcome Lib., London, MS 6076. Cox's radical credentials are strongly suggested by the favourable reception which he gave the seeker Laurence Clarkson in the late 1640s, when the latter reported that he 'came constantly to hear me' at Sandridge in Hertfordshire: L. Clarkson, *The Lost Sheep Found* (London, 1660), 23.

⁶⁴ [R. Filmer], *An Advertisement to the Jury-Men of England, Touching Witches. Together with a Difference Between an English and Hebrew Witch* (London, 1653); T. Ady, *A Candle in the Dark: Or, A Treatise Concerning the Nature of Witches and Witchcraft: Being Advice to Judges, Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, and Grand Jury-Men, what to do, before they passe sentence on such as are Arraigned for their Lives, as Witches* (London, 1656) [quote at 59]; reprinted as *A Perfect Discovery of Witches. Shewing the Divine Cause of the Distractions of this Kingdom, and also of the Christian World* (London, 1661). Ian Bostridge suggests that Filmer's more subtle anti-Catholicism is evident in his juxtaposition of the puritan William Perkins' views on witchcraft with those of the Jesuit Martín Del Río (1551–1608), a strategy 'as subversive as the prints of the 1640s which show Jesuit wolves in Puritan sheep's clothing': [Filmer], *Advertisement*, 6; I. Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations c. 1650–c. 1750* (Oxford, 1997), 18.

arrivistes of Kent politics whose social, spiritual, and political programme of reform was anathema to men like Filmer, a diehard royalist who had suffered greatly at the hands of the victors in the first civil war. Filmer himself, as Ian Bostridge has shown, was a convert to the sceptical cause, having originally subscribed to more orthodox views on witchcraft and the reality of the diabolical covenant in the early 1640s. Filmer's *volte face* on this issue, moreover, was almost certainly indebted to his loathing for the covenant of grace which Bostridge depicts as integral to puritan soteriology.⁶⁵ But was Filmer's last published work on witchcraft a covert attempt to denigrate all puritans, including those of a moderate disposition, many of whom shared his social and political conservatism? Given his knowledge of the trials and those who instigated them, it seems more likely that his prime motive in writing *An Advertisement to the Jury-Men of England* was not to alienate moderate puritan opinion but rather to expose the folly of those radical commonwealthmen who had insinuated themselves into the government of the county in the aftermath of the regicide. Here, among the gathered churches of Kent, covenanting was a cherished ideal, which constituted the bedrock of the New Jerusalem that was emerging from the ashes of the old dispensation. And if this was the case, Filmer may have found allies among socially conservative, orthodox Calvinist members of the godly. It was surely no coincidence, for example, that in 1649—the year of the regicide—a neighbouring minister, Hezekiah Holland, wrote sceptically of witchcraft while citing one of Filmer's earlier, anonymous publications in which he had sought to expose Calvin's doctrine of the blasphemy against the holy ghost as a recipe for spiritual anarchy and incipient antinomianism:

'Tis reported that Witches deny their Baptisme (so that the water since receives them not) but such confessions some of them have made, such repentance, and have made such ends that I dare not but judge charitably; therefore tis not impossible to renew such as fall from these principles, and consequently no sin against the Holy Ghost, never mentioned in the Epistles, never called in the Gospel by that name, but the *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*. See a book of that Title very judiciously pend; and Printed about the year 1646.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Ibid., 13–21. For Filmer's sufferings at the hands of the parliamentarians in his native Kent, see his entry in *ODNB*, sub Filmer, Robert. For the strength of royalist allegiances in Kent up to 1649, see especially Everitt, *Community of Kent*.

⁶⁶ H. Holland, *A Christian Looking-Glasse: Or, A Glimps of Christs Unchangably Everlasting Love. Discovered in Several Sermons, in the Parish-Church of Sutton-Valence* (London, 1649), 77. Holland, about whom little is known, was a refugee from Ireland in the 1640s; he was installed at Sutton Valence in about 1644–45. The parish itself borders that of East Sutton, where Filmer had his residence, thus increasing the likelihood that Holland was acting in part as a cipher for the former's views on witchcraft. Holland's published sermons were partly motivated by a desire to halt the spread of heresy and the views of the 'paedobaptists' in the vicinity of Sutton Valence, but all to no avail. Holland's parish was the focus of a dispute over tithes in 1652–53, and by 1656 he was engaged in a pamphlet war with the encroaching Baptists, led by George Hammon (for whom, see above, 151n, 152), whose subversive tenets were being 'spread in my parish'. Two years later Holland was attacked in print by the Quaker and Baptist renegade Thomas Howsigoe of Staplehurst: Anon., *No Age Like Unto This Age*, 5; H. Holland, *Adam's Condition in Paradise Discovered... Also a Treatise of the Lawful Ministry; and the Manner of Sion's Redemption Opened: In Answer to a Book of George Hammond, a Taylor, of Biddenden in Kent* (London, 1656); T. Howsigoe, *The Lye and False Accuser made Manifest... The Copy of One Letter with 12 Queries that were written unto Hezekiah Holland, Priest*

Filmer himself echoed these sentiments in his own later work on witchcraft, when in 1653 he insinuated, like Holland, that witchcraft was a pardonable offence and thus no ‘sinne against the Holy Ghost’.⁶⁷

In many respects then, it probably makes sense to see Filmer’s work on witchcraft as an attempt to appeal to a wide constituency of opinion, including those more mainstream puritans committed to the concept of a single state Church, many of whom shared Filmer’s antipathy to the regicide. Holland, it would appear, came from such a background.⁶⁸ Some of these men no doubt continued to sit on grand juries, and were advised accordingly to exercise discretion and ‘hazard their Consciences’ in reaching verdicts of life and death in cases of witchcraft. Failure to prevent miscarriages of justice, Filmer implied, would lead to the ruin of the nation and a return to the dark days of popish ignorance—a coded critique, in all likelihood, of a republican regime that was becoming increasingly unstable and void of legitimacy in the eyes of traditionalists like the author of *Patriarcha* as well as others who had previously supported the parliamentary cause. If, as suggested here, it was the aim of Filmer to destabilize the commonwealth, then it might help to explain why one of the foremost defenders of divine right monarchy, a political theory generally assumed to promote demonological speculation, felt compelled to question important elements of witch belief and witchcraft as a credible crime. Put simply, Filmer encouraged fellow dissidents to question the legitimacy of the state by challenging its competence to try a range of politicized crimes, including witchcraft. Filmer, after all, did not call for the repeal of the witchcraft statutes, but rather sought to propose a more sensitive and acute understanding of what witchcraft was and how it might be detected.

There can be little doubt that the establishment of the republic, with its various oaths and engagements, created a minefield for tender consciences and a crisis of public confidence in the new order. The legal consequences were correspondingly vast. Derek Hirst, for example, has persuasively argued that the failure of the campaign for moral reformation in particular and godly rule in general in the 1650s came about as a result of the willingness of large numbers of Englishmen to reject the authority of a legal system which they perceived as ‘controlled by an abhorrent power’.⁶⁹ How many others, one is tempted to speculate, were inclined to agree with the embittered royalist who argued in 1649 that should an interregnum prevail then all statutes and common

of Sutton in Kent (London, 1658). There was a long tradition of religious radicalism in Sutton Valence that pre-dated the civil war and was closely associated with the charismatic figure of John Turner, who was in the vanguard of the movement in Kent to destroy tithes and a state-salaried church in the early 1650s: Acheson, ‘Sion’s Saint’, 183–98.

⁶⁷ [Filmer], *Advertisement*, 6. For the earlier work of Filmer, alluded to by Holland, see [R. Filmer], *Of the Blasphemie against the Holy Ghost* (London?, 1646). Bostridge, quite rightly in my view, conceives of Filmer’s subsequent tract on witchcraft as ‘the second instalment of the political-cum-religious polemic’ that he had started in *Of the Blasphemie against the Holy Ghost*: Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations*, 15.

⁶⁸ Holland’s specific religious and political affiliations are difficult to pin down. In July 1649, he portrayed himself as something of a *politique* who, though naturally inclined to monarchy, had opted to acquiesce in the face of political realities: Holland, *Christian Looking-Glasse*, 4–5.

⁶⁹ D. Hirst, ‘The Failure of Godly Rule in the English Republic’, *Past and Present*, 132 (1991), 62.

law 'should neither be of force or use'?⁷⁰ The implications for prosecutions of witchcraft may have been considerable, influencing opponents of the various regimes established between 1649 and 1660 to avoid the promotion of witch trials on the grounds of the political incompetence and illegitimacy of those administering the legal system. Similar thinking, it has been suggested, may account for the absence of witch trials in early modern Ireland, where the majority Catholic population refused to acknowledge the legal authority of the English court system.⁷¹

The idea that the law might be manipulated for partisan ends and that words, be they legal terms or everyday in kind, might lose their original, consensual meanings, was another effect of political upheaval in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. Language, in effect, became unstable and, as a number of contemporaries commented, people now required new dictionaries in order to make sense of the unprecedented events unfolding around them.⁷² The debate surrounding witchcraft was not immune from such a process, which can be seen at work in the attempt by both Filmer and Ady to redefine witchcraft in an age in which, as we have seen, rival sects and parties repeatedly resorted to demonological stereotypes in order to discredit each other. Ady in particular eagerly charged 'the more Judicious and Wise, and Discreet part of the Clergie of England' to rethink their attitude to such issues and to conclude with him that the traditional figure of the witch, based on a false reading of the many types of witches to be found in the Old Testament, was in fact a generic term for a false prophet or spiritual apostate.⁷³ In making such a claim Ady sounds remarkably like those critics of the radical sects, many drawn from the ranks of mainstream puritanism, who used the pulpit and the press to stigmatize their opponents with demonological slurs. Indeed, the association was in all likelihood no coincidence, for as close research into Ady's background suggests, he was almost certainly a product of that nursery of the English godly, Essex puritanism.

Hitherto something of an invisible man, most commentators on Ady have been forced to rely on what little can be gleaned from his only published work and other, scattered sources. Thomas Ady (d.1672), we know, was a physician by training, Cambridge educated, who lived much of his life in the Essex village of Wethersfield, alongside his wife Barbara and children Dorothy, Barbara, Joan, and Thomas.⁷⁴ However, close scrutiny of local records suggests that Ady was also a well-connected

⁷⁰ [J. Cleveland], *Majestas Intemerata, or the Immortality of the King* (London?, 1649), 118–19. It was a familiar refrain of royalist polemic after the Restoration that the laws of England had been made a 'nose of wax' in the 1640s and 1650s, with the guilty acquitted and the innocent condemned by 'Ignoramus Juries and suborned Witnesses': T. Long, *King David's Danger and Deliverance* [Exeter, 9 September 1683] (London, 1683), 19. Such views were clearly shared by some lower down the social ladder. In the early stages of the civil war, a Norfolk woman was reported as saying that 'nowe there is noe king, noe Lawes, nor noe Justice': NkRO, C/S3, box 34, bundle 3 (1642–45), information of William Stanton, 1643.

⁷¹ E. C. Lapoint, 'Irish Immunity to Witch-Hunting, 1534–1711', *Eire/Ireland*, 27 (1992), 76–92.

⁷² I discuss the implications of linguistic instability, its relationship to political change, and impact on the decline of witchcraft more fully in Chapter 6.

⁷³ Ady, *Candle in the Dark*, 3, 11–14.

⁷⁴ Ady was educated like his brother and fellow physician, Edward, at Emmanuel College, Cambridge: Venn, i, 8; J. H. Raach, *A Directory of English Country Physicians 1603–43* (London, 1962), 21.

figure, whose familial and other connections placed him firmly in the orbit of mainstream puritan, and later Presbyterian, circles in Essex. He was almost certainly reared in an intensely godly household, his father Thomas (d.1647) providing refuge to Samuel Rogers (d.1638), the son of the local minister and eminent puritan preacher Daniel Rogers (1573–1652), in 1635.⁷⁵ Ady senior was clearly a member of the formidable network of godly clergy and laity that dominated this part of Essex in the first half of the seventeenth century. In his will, made in 1642, he left small bequests to his pastor Daniel Rogers, Stephen Marshall (d.1655) of Finchingfield, and Daniel Sutton (d.1664), curate at Wethersfield, as well as requesting that his son Thomas continue to pay £3 towards ‘the Mayntayninge & upholdinge of the Lecture in Wethersfield’.⁷⁶ Ady’s son, Thomas, was likewise well connected, possessing important connections to the political leadership of the puritan and parliamentary parties in the 1640s through his sister Martha or Mathye, who was married to the Cambridge Chandler and alderman John Lowery (d.1669). Lowery served as mayor of Cambridge in 1644–45 and sat as MP for the town, alongside Oliver Cromwell, from 1640 to 1653. Like Cromwell, he was an active member of the Eastern Association and served as a colonel in the parliamentary armies. He was later nominated to sit on the commission set up to judge Charles I in 1649, but, for reasons unexplained, failed to take up his place. Thereafter, he seems to have retired to Cambridgeshire, where he continued to act as a JP and examine candidates for the ministry.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ T. Webster and K. Shipps (eds), *The Diary of Samuel Rogers, 1634–1638* (Woodbridge, 2004), 13 and n. The editors assume that the reference in Rogers’ diary to ‘Mr Adey’ alludes to the physician Edward Ady. I suspect, however, that the use of Mr rather than Dr suggests that this is much more likely to refer to Edward’s father, Thomas Ady Snr. Edward Ady was a Cambridge graduate, having been educated at that most advanced of puritan seminaries, Emmanuel College, in the 1620s. He was admitted an extra-licentiate of the London College of Physicians in 1631. In that year, he was consulted by the puritan physician John Bastwick with regard to a patient in Colchester. Edward predeceased his father who alludes to him as the uncle of his grandson, Thomas Draper, in his will made in June 1642: Venn, i, 8; RCPL, Annals, iii, fo. 112b; Munk, i, 204–5; Bodl., Rawlinson MS D 377, fos 3, 9 [letters of Bastwick to Dr Ady, undated]; ERO, D/AM/W5/53 [will of Thomas Ady Snr, gent., of Wethersfield, 14 June 1642, with codicil 4 October 1647; proved 13 October 1647]. Bastwick may well have known Edward Ady from his days as a student of the puritan Richard Rogers at Wethersfield, c.1611–14.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Thomas Ady Snr was buried at Wethersfield on 13 October 1647: ERO, D/P 119/1/1 [parish registers of Wethersfield, 1647–1724]. His wife, Mary (though probably not Thomas’ mother), who left a separate will, predeceased him. She left the bulk of her estate to her ‘loving cousin’ Colonel John Hardwick: TNA, PROB 11/197, fos 6r–v [24 February 1644/45; proved 22 July 1646]. A quitclaim made in 1632 mentions one Anne Adey, the wife of Thomas Adey of Wethersfield, gent., and in all likelihood the mother of Thomas and his siblings: ERO, D/DSx/416.

⁷⁷ For Lowery, see D. Brunton and D. H. Pennington, *Members of the Long Parliament* (London, 1954), 112; Kingston, *East Anglia and the Great Civil War*, 385; *The Names of the Justices of the Peace, for England and Wales ... 1650* (London, 1650), 7; LPL, MS 996. Ady Snr owned land in Cambridge, which he left to another daughter Ann, the wife of John Badcock of Cambridge. Badcock’s father, John (d.1634 or 1635), had also served as an alderman of the corporation: Cambridgeshire Archives, P27/1/2 [parish registers of St Clement’s, Cambridge, burials 1560–1672]. Ady Jnr’s Cambridge connections may explain his knowledge of the case of a townswoman accused of keeping a tame frog in a box, who was executed for witchcraft there in 1645. He also describes a dispute between a university scholar and a minister of the town concerning the power of witches: Ady, *Candle in the Dark*, 63–5, 135.

There is no surviving evidence, however, to suggest that Ady ever utilized these connections, though his own marriage and those of his children strongly suggest that he was very much at home in the godly circles traversed by his father and brother-in-law (discussed more fully below). He seems to have begun his medical practice in the village of Shudy Camps in Cambridgeshire, close to the Essex border, where he first set up home with his wife and where three of his children were born. Here, he seems to have made enemies of fellow puritan John Symcotts (c.1592–1662), a medical practitioner from Huntingdon, whose correspondence contains various uncomplimentary references to Ady's medical abilities.⁷⁸ Early evidence of a puritan antipathy for the rule of bishops is suggested by the fact that in 1640 Ady was fined for not appearing before the visitation at Ely, overseen by the notorious Matthew Wren, where he was required to show his licence to practise medicine (he held no medical degree or other qualifications).⁷⁹ He would appear to have returned to his native Essex in the early 1640s, possibly following the outbreak of the civil war. In 1644, for example, his puritan proclivities once again came to the fore, when he was cited in the sequestration articles of an Essex minister, Timothy Clay, who had a reputation as a great drinker. There, it was alleged that on one occasion Clay had embarked on a week of sustained drinking 'till he was distempered to distraction', wherein Ady 'sent him Word, that if he would not leave his drinking Sack he would be starke mad'. He was certainly resident at Wethersfield by 1648, when another daughter, name unknown, was born to Thomas and Barbara Ady and baptized in the local church. By this stage in his life and career, Ady was firmly established in local society.⁸⁰

The godly connections that Ady's father had cultivated in the years prior to his death in 1647 were carefully strengthened by his physician son, both through his own marriage to Barbara Sparrow,⁸¹ as well as via the various marriages he negotiated for his daughters. His eldest daughter Dorothy (c.1638–1722), for

⁷⁸ F. N. L. Poynter and W. J. Bishop (eds), *A Seventeenth-Century Doctor and His Patients: John Symcotts, 1592?–1662* (Bedford, Bedfordshire Historical Rec. Soc., 31, 1951), 19 [Symcotts to John?, n.d.], 43 [Symcotts to Richard Powers, shopkeeper at Ramsey, 20 March 1642], 59. Among other things, Symcotts described Ady as a 'noddie' who 'thinks what an adventure it is to take blood from an old, withered man, whose fountains of blood-making may be justly suspected of weakness and some unsoundness'.

⁷⁹ Cambridgeshire Archives, P35/1/1 [parish register of Shudy Camps, 1558–1681]; CUL, EDR, B/2/52, fo. 41v. Dorothy and Joan Ady were baptized here on 23 October 1638 and 2 September 1640 respectively. A third daughter, Mary, was buried on 29 September 1640. I'd like to thank Roy Jose for sharing with me his wide knowledge of the parish and its registers.

⁸⁰ BL, Add. MS 5829, 17; ERO, D/P 119/1/1. If this daughter was christened Mary, then she was buried at Wethersfield in June 1655.

⁸¹ Barbara was the daughter of William Sparrow of Sible Hedingham, Essex. Ady is mentioned in the will of his brother-in-law, William Sparrow (d.1648), which is notably pious, the testator expecting 'to live everlasting in the highest heavens with God the Father, God the sonne and God the holy ghost & to enjoy the Company of all the glorious and holey Saints and Angels in heaven to all Eternity'. Barbara's cousin, John Sparrow (1615–1670), the son of the regicide Colonel John Sparrow (d.1664), produced numerous translations of the works of Jacob Boehme in the 1650s: W. C. Metcalfe (ed.), *The Visitations of Essex... 1552–1634. Part 2* (London, Harleian Soc., 14, 1879), 714–15; TNA, PROB 11/206, fos 143v–144v [will of William Sparrow, yeoman, 25 March 1648; proved 21 November 1648]; *ODNB*, sub Sparrow, John.

example, married William Collard (c.1639–1674) of Barnston in Essex, the grandson of William Collard, a leading figure in local Presbyterian circles who acted as elder for the village in the 1648 classis. Like Ady's brother-in-law John Lowery, his son-in-law William Collard (d.1668) was a member of the Eastern Association and served on various parliamentary county committees in the 1640s as well as acting as a JP in Essex in the 1650s.⁸² Another daughter, Barbara, married Mark Mott (d. 1694), the son of the Presbyterian minister of the same name.⁸³ As for Thomas' only son, also named Thomas, he was educated, in typical fashion for sons of the godly in Essex, at Felsted, where among his schoolfellows was his future brother-in-law William Collard. Earlier alumni included four of the sons of Oliver Cromwell.⁸⁴ Oddly, given the Adys' immersion in local godly networks, Thomas Ady the physician and witchcraft author was largely absent from the public stage and made no overt contribution to the various religious and political debates then raging in this part of England.⁸⁵ He also held no local offices of note. One possible explanation, though there is little hard evidence to confirm the conjecture, is that Ady may have spent much of the 1650s (or at least the early part of it) serving as a physician in the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland. In addition to the fact that he described examples of the papists carrying charms into battle 'in the late Irish Warres', Ady either purchased or was granted expropriated land in Ireland in 1656 which, it is conceivable, he may have received in return for military service there.⁸⁶ Whatever the case, Ady was still in possession of these lands at his death in 1672, when they and other properties in Wethersfield passed to his wife Barbara, daughters Dorothy and Joanna, and son Thomas.⁸⁷

⁸² P. Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*, 2 vols (London, 1763–68), ii, 450; Shaw, *History of the English Church*, ii, 383; CSPD, 1640, 310; Kingston, *East Anglia and the Civil War*, 385; *Names of the Justices of the Peace, 1650*, 22; Firth and Rait, i, 169, 621, 1083. In his will, William Collard Snr left bequests to the former puritan incumbent of the parish John Beadle and his successor Mr Smyth: TNA, PROB 11/326, fos 335v–337r [20 June 1667, with codicil 20 July 1667; proved 28 April 1668]. The complex family tree of the Collards can be reconstructed from the extant parish registers of Barnston: see ERO, D/P 153/1/1 [1539–1774].

⁸³ Morant, *History of Essex*, ii, 376; Venn, iii, 222. For the moderate puritan Mark Mott (d.1667), who was opposed to the excesses of radical sectarianism but nonetheless lost his living in the great ejection of 1662, see *Cal. Rev.*, 358; W. Hunt, *The Puritan Moment: The Coming of Revolution in an English County* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1983), 292, 300. Mott, too, made no mention of his son or daughter-in-law, Barbara, in his will of 1667: TNA, PROB 11/324, fos 136v–137v [29 April 1667; proved 5 June 1667]. Ady's other surviving daughter, Joan or Joanna, married a London merchant named Robert Maddocks, of whom I have found no trace.

⁸⁴ F. S. Moller (ed.), *Alumni Felstediensis: being a List of Boys Entered at Felsted School, May 1564–September 1931* (London, 1931), 5, 9. He was subsequently admitted a member of Gray's Inn on 28 November 1667: J. Foster (ed.), *The Register of Admissions to Grays Inn, 1521–1889* (London, 1889), 303.

⁸⁵ Among the few references to Ady in local records, there is one to his presentment before quarter sessions in 1660 for making a ditch in the highway 'which is very dangerous and never done before': ERO, Q/SR 383/41 [Easter 1660]. A year later one Thomas Adye, residence unknown, was subjected to a beating by a gentleman called Morris Browne, for which he was charged to appear and answer at the next sessions: ERO, Q/SR 388/53 [recognizance dated 1 April 1661].

⁸⁶ Ady, *Candle in the Dark*, 56; *Fifteenth Report of the Irish Record Commission Respecting the Public Records of Ireland* (Dublin, 1825), 233, 245.

⁸⁷ TNA, PROB 11/339, fos 3v–5v [15 October 1662; proved 20 May 1672].

These are the bare details of Ady's life as would appear to have survived and they provide few clues as to the source of his sceptical approach to witchcraft. However, on the basis of comments made in *A Candle in the Dark*, allied to what is already known of Ady's religious background and events in his own parish and neighbourhood at the time he published on witchcraft, it is possible, I believe, to make an educated conjecture at his motive for writing and the source of his scepticism. Ady, I suggest here, was prompted to speak out against what he perceived as the persecution of old women for witchcraft because he felt that there were more urgent problems facing the magistracy in the form of a different kind of 'witch' from that now enshrined in English common law. Biblical witchcraft, in Ady's eyes, amounted to nothing other than the wicked actions of 'false prophets', who 'intice the people to spiritual Whoredom', and it is these who should be cut off from the land by those entrusted with the sword of justice. Typically, the chief offenders were Catholic zealots like the Jesuits and it is they who Ady believed should feel the full force of Exodus 22:18 'because these Witches are they that bewitch the people . . . by their severall deluding impostures, leading the people to Idolatry, and also to the undermining of Governments'.⁸⁸ Ady's language is strikingly reminiscent of that used by other representatives of mainstream puritanism at this time to denigrate the activities of a host of radical sectarian groups, including the Quakers, who were widely construed as closet papists set on undermining the foundations of the Protestant faith in England. Ady's home parish of Wethersfield had early experience of such activity. In 1646, the followers of the Baptist prophet Samuel Oates were waylaid by a group of parishioners there who proceeded to 'pump' them at the village pond, a form of ritual punishment that plainly echoed that reserved for suspected witches.⁸⁹ By the time Ady came to write *A Candle in the Dark*, the area around Wethersfield was a cauldron of religious fanaticism, division, and political conflict.⁹⁰ Men of moderate puritan principles such as Ady (who in his will of 1662, made just a month after the mass expulsion of puritan ministers from the Church, described himself pointedly as 'a professed member of the true Christian Protestant Church of England') were particularly sensitive to the spiritual anarchy that now threatened to engulf the nation. Faced with the collapse of orderly government in Church and state, he thus appealed in 1656 to 'the more Judicious and Wise, and Discreet part of the Clergie of England' to remedy the situation by

⁸⁸ Ady, *Candle in the Dark*, 11–13, 42, 43, 56, 58–9, 85, 93, 138.

⁸⁹ T. Edwards, *The Third Part of Gangraena* (London, 1646), 105–6.

⁹⁰ In 1655, for example, Samuel Pasfield of Wethersfield was prosecuted at the quarter sessions for publicly disparaging a local JP, Dudley Templer, and thus bringing the magistracy into contempt. Two years later, a local husbandman was sent to the house of correction for a month for pouring scorn on the recently appointed vicar John Cole and, in Quaker fashion, claiming that men like him 'go in sheeps clotheing but inwardly they are ravening wolves': ERO, Q/SR 366/23 [19 July 1655]; 376/15 [15 November 1657]. Ady's fear of the danger of divine inspiration is attested by his citation of the case of a 'grave minister' from the Isle of Ely who 'reported that an Angel told him, that the Judgement Day should be upon the next Friday': Ady, *Candle in the Dark*, 127. The minister in question was almost certainly the seeker William Sedgwick (1609–1663 or 1664) of Ely, who is said to have made the prophecy in 1647: C. H. Firth (ed.), *The Clarke Papers*, 4 vols (London, Camden Soc., 49, 54, 61, 62, 1891–1901), i, 4.

focusing their energies on the ‘real’ and more pressing sins and crimes that now beset the nation. At the same time he warned against what he clearly perceived as a genuine threat to the lives of the godly when he intimated that the true aim of this ‘antichristian policy’ hatched by ‘false prophets’ and their Jesuit masters was to persuade the civil magistrate to use the witchcraft laws to ‘cut off’ those who might oppose them. Ady, there can be little doubt, was seeking to avert a bloodbath of the godly at the hands of those who now threatened to turn the world upside down.⁹¹ And in order to achieve such an end, it was imperative that the godly—mainstream puritans of moderate disposition, including Presbyterians and Independents—acted together, as one, to confront and vanquish the threat posed by radical sectaries and popish fifth columnists.⁹²

Occasionally, one catches a glimpse of this anarchic world in a work that is otherwise surprisingly devoid of contemporary references to acts of supposed witchcraft or related phenomena. A case in point is Ady’s description of a case of diabolical possession that is supposed to have taken place at Braintree, just a few miles south of Wethersfield, shortly before publication. Citing the case of the exposure of the fraudulent maid of Westwell in Kent by Reginald Scot (for which, see above, p. 21), he comments that:

such a Maid was lately at Braintree in Essex, who practised the same imposture to the astonishment of many, and gained mony from the deceived beholders, until the report thereof grew stale, and fools had done wondering, and the concourse of people ceased, and her gains came not in, and then the Devil did easily leave her, and the business almost forgotten, and yet no men ready to put in execution the Law of God against her, or any such, as against poor people that are accused of by such, and by fools, and hanged up without ground or warrant, or possibility of truth.⁹³

Various aspects of this case are intriguing. First, it cannot be without significance that the furore surrounding the possessed maid with special powers to detect witches coincided with a critical period in the governance of Braintree. Henry French, for example, has dated the collapse of the vestry there, which oversaw the running of the parish, to about 1655, when he suggests that stagnation ensued on

⁹¹ Ady, *Candle in the Dark*, 138. It cannot have escaped Ady’s notice, nor that of his clerical friends, that critics of the established church consistently denounced its ministers as ‘witches’ and agents of the Devil, ripe for destruction: see Elmer, ‘“Saints and Sorcerers”’, 168–70. Moreover, in arguing against contemporary interpretations of scripture and the current witchcraft laws, Ady would appear to have been acutely aware of linguistic instability and its effect on meaning for ‘the bare signification of words do prove nothing directly’: Ady, *Candle in the Dark*, 86.

⁹² Ady’s probable commitment to, and support for, the Cromwellian church and regime that upheld it is suggested by both his choice of publisher as well as other stray comments in his writing. The Independent Robert Ibbitson was a prolific publisher of works by moderate puritan divines, including John Brinsley, Samuel Clarke, John Durant, Samuel Fairclough, Richard Resbury, and Edward Reyner. He was also employed by the government to publish pro-government newspapers in the 1650s, many of which set out to defend the regicide. Ady himself certainly echoed contemporary government propaganda when, ‘on good intelligence’, he scolded Scottish Presbyterians for the recent slaughter of witches there and, noting the recent conquest of the country by Cromwell, remarked pointedly, ‘what is become of their Presbyterian Authority now?’. A. Tubb, ‘Printing the Regicide of Charles I’, *History*, 89 (2004), 509, 514, 516, 519; Ady, *Candle in the Dark*, 105.

⁹³ Ady, *Candle in the Dark*, 79.

the death of the long-serving minister Samuel Collins (1576–1651) and other leading figures in this hitherto model puritan town. Ady himself would have been well informed of these developments. His daughter Barbara was to marry the grandson of that venerable patriarch of Braintree, the godly clothier Adrian Mott (1578–1662), who had been one of the driving forces behind the vestry prior to the troubles of the mid-1650s.⁹⁴ But who was the woman masquerading as a ‘discoverer of witches’ who may well have been seeking to exploit the current divisions in the town in order to promote her trade? From Ady’s brief comments, it seems clear that she had been active for some time in other places and that she had hitherto enjoyed more than a little success. In the absence of incontrovertible evidence, it is impossible to speak with certainty, but there is a strong possibility that the woman in question was one Frances Burges, whose name appears repeatedly as a witness in a series of witch trials in Hertfordshire and Essex during the period from 1647 to 1655. In the former year, she was a witness in the trial of an accused witch from the parish of Waltham Holy Cross in Essex. Three years later, she was testifying against two men and one woman accused of witchcraft in Hertfordshire (Ardeley and Ashwell), as well as two other women at Newport and Great Chesterford in neighbouring Essex. In 1651, she was again active at Barnston in Essex, and three years later she re-emerges at one of her old haunts at Waltham, where she was again involved, unsuccessfully, in the prosecution of her first victim.⁹⁵ She thus appears to have been active in an area of approximately twenty to twenty-five square miles centred on the market town of Bishop’s Stortford, situated close to the Essex border in Hertfordshire.

The case at Barnston, on the outer edges of Burges’ circuit and close to both Wethersfield and Braintree, is particularly intriguing as Barnston was the home of the godly Collards into whose family Thomas Ady’s daughter, Dorothy, married (though probably a few years after this date). The interruption to village life may not have been welcome. At the assizes, the grand jury found no case to answer, and it may be significant that the magistrate responsible for committal was not himself a local man but resident some fifteen miles away at the village of either Great or Little Chishill on the Essex–Cambridgeshire–Hertfordshire border. Nor was the accused the usual suspect—an old woman on the margins of respectable society. Joan Waite and her husband Robert had lived in the village since their marriage in 1636 and two of their children were baptized at Barnston. Robert also signed the Protestation alongside the Collards and the Presbyterian minister of the parish, John Beadle

⁹⁴ H. R. French, ‘Chief Inhabitants and Their Areas of Influence: Local Ruling Groups in Essex and Suffolk Parishes, 1630–1720’, PhD thesis (Cambridge, 1993), 154–5. French in particular points to the ‘laconic’ and increasingly infrequent minutes of the vestry from this period: see ERO, D/Ubb 2. By the early 1650s, the town was producing Ranters. Two Braintree women, a mother and daughter, were arrested in London in 1651 and charged with holding various ‘erroneous, damnable and blasphemous opinions’: Jeaffreson, iii, 204; J. Taylor, *Ranters of Both Sexes, Male and Female* (London, 1651), 2.

⁹⁵ TNA, ASSI 35/88/4/8, 17; 35/91/9/1, 9; 35/92/1, 11, 12, 51; 35/95/2/24, 25; 35/96/1/14, 15; Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, 236. It should be noted that the former case is cited by A. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (London, 1970), but does not appear in Ewen, *Witch Hunting*.

(d. 1667), in 1641.⁹⁶ Is it possible that cases such as these, which Ady, with his links to the village, must have known well, informed his growing scepticism with regard to witchcraft? Since the Hopkins trials, there were growing signs of unease in puritan circles, especially among many Presbyterians, as to the methods employed by the witch hunters and the tendency of the hunts to devour some of their own as well as the ungodly.⁹⁷ In tones reminiscent of fellow puritan physician John Cotta four decades earlier, Ady too was critical of practices like swimming and unnerved by the fact that Hopkins' victims included a clergyman. He clearly believed that in the wrong hands the laws against witches might be used by the civil magistrate to silence all enemies except 'such as are in places of Dignity, or so well esteemed in Common-wealths, or have such friendship among the potent of the Land, that thereby they are able to withstand their Adversaries'. In short, witchcraft was nothing less than a political crime or a crime that had become so politicized by the events of the 1640s as to render it obnoxious to true Christians and a danger to the body politic. Others no doubt concurred. By the end of the interregnum, there can be little doubt that the puritan movement, deeply divided on so many issues, was equally torn on the question of witchcraft. The Hopkins trials had created deep fissures among the godly as to the extent of the Devil's power over mankind. As more and more religious groups and sects sought to appropriate the laws against witches as a vehicle to promote their own ends, some moderate puritans such as Ady cautioned against the promotion of witch trials as divisive and contrary to good order in Church and state. Clearly, not all his co-religionists agreed. Indeed, in many ways Ady's tract should be read as a cautionary work addressed to those who shared his broad religious (though not necessarily political) sympathies. Again, it is probably no coincidence that some of those who would appear to have supported Frances Burges in her last recorded appearance at the assizes were drawn from the ranks of local Presbyterian networks in and around Waltham Abbey.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Beadle, a former chaplain of the earl of Warwick, was frequently in trouble with the Laudian authorities in the 1630s. He was probably intruded at Barnston at the request of his godly kinsman Samuel Collins, vicar of Braintree: T. Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c. 1620–1643* (Cambridge, 1997), 32 and *passim*; LPL, MS 943, fos 247, 283; CSPD, 1631–1633, 341; *Cal. Rev.*, 41. Like many other fellow Presbyterians, he was clearly perturbed by the religious divisions of the 1650s and may have obliquely referred to the earlier commotion caused by witchcraft in his congregation when, in 1656, he commented that 'Union is from God, division from the Devil, who where he comes with his cloven foot, separates chief friends': J. B[eadle], *The Journal or Diary of a Thankful Christian Presented in Some Meditations upon Numb. 33.2* (London, 1656), 32; cf. the comment of the minister John Fuller in the preface to the same work where he states that 'Satan . . . hath bewitched us in our present age, from one side and extreame to another; the whole fabrick of religion (which we expected to be repaired and reformed) is almost quite cast down: *ibid.*, b2r–v [dated 12 October 1655].

⁹⁷ In addition to the examples cited above, one might add that of Arthur Wilson (d.1652), Presbyterian steward to the earl of Warwick, whose own scepticism developed in reaction to witnessing the Hopkins trials at first hand: A. Wilson, 'Observations of Gods providence in the tract of my life', in F. Peck (ed.), *Desiderata Curiosa*, 2 vols (London, 1779), ii, 476–7. It does need to be borne in mind, however, that, as John Walter has recently reminded us, much of Wilson's diary was written long after the events he described: J. Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: The Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge, 1999), 42 and n.

⁹⁸ Edward Golding served as elder in the Waltham Abbey classis in 1648. Zachary Crofton (1626–1672) was a fiery, uncompromising, and somewhat unstable puritan minister, whose zealous

From a political perspective, witchcraft functioned on many levels and in ways that often appeared, superficially at least, to be contradictory. Under certain circumstances, the tendency to expose and root out witches almost certainly acted as a pressure valve and encouraged unity among like-minded men and women eager to promote their particular vision of a godly society. But on other occasions, as suggested by the example of Ady, witchcraft scares might destabilize good order in the commonwealth and promote discord and division within communities as well as among the godly. These contradictory tensions, I have suggested, were present from the earliest years of the Protestant settlement in England. There seems little doubt, however, that they became increasingly exposed and fraught during the 1640s and 1650s, particularly following the emergence of the sects and ensuing debates over the religious and political settlement of the country. Now, no single group was either immune from the charge of witchcraft or possessed an unchallenged grip on the reins of power and the legal system that enabled prosecutions against suspected witches to proceed. The contradictory tensions inherent in witchcraft at this time are particularly well illustrated by a number of cases that appeared before the courts in Yorkshire during the interregnum. Here, godly magistrates such as Colonel Henry Tempest (c.1621–1659), committed to the moral regeneration of the nation, were active in searching out witches, often by recourse to the methods recently popularized by Hopkins in East Anglia.⁹⁹ The county did in fact experience a large number of trials in this period. Nonetheless, guilty verdicts were rare, and convicted witches were often reprieved. Local politics once again may have played a vital role. At Kingston-upon-Hull in 1651, for example, a suspected witch was able to draw on the support of a mass petition in her favour signed by, among others, a garrison commander and the local minister and physician. The case itself arose during a period of acute religious and political strife in the town, occasioned by the militant ambitions of the Presbyterian preacher John Shawe (1608–1672) and the recent arrival of the equally combative Independent John Canne (d.c.1667), which culminated in the physical division of the town's main church. The puritan credentials of a number of the accused witch's supporters (Colonel Christopher Legard and Robert Wittie) suggest that the case

commitment to the Presbyterian cause frequently landed him in trouble in the 1650s and 1660s. At the time of the witch trial in 1655 he was serving the cure of Graveley in Hertfordshire, some distance from Waltham: Shaw, *History of the English Church*, ii, 383; *ODNB*, sub Crofton, Zachary. At least two other active Presbyterian laymen, serving as JPs in Essex during the interregnum, were responsible for committing witches in this period. Sir John Barrington of Hatfield Broad Oak and Isaac Alleyn of Maldon both acted as elders for the classes established in their respective localities: TNA, ASSI 35/90/7/83; 35/94/1/57; Shaw, *History of the English Church*, ii, 379, 382, 392. The trend continued after the Restoration. In 1663, Sir Robert Kempe, who had acted as Presbyterian elder for Finchingfield in 1648, oversaw the committal of a witch at Chelmsford in 1663: TNA, ASSI 35/104/2/65; Shaw, *History of the English Church*, ii, 386.

⁹⁹ Tempest, who investigated numerous cases of witchcraft in the early 1650s, was appointed a JP in January 1649 and later served as MP for the county in 1654 and 1656. In 1650 he ordered a strip-search of one suspect. His religious radicalism is suggested by his patronage of the local minister, Richard Tonge, an antinomian, to whom he left an annuity of £5 pa in 1659: TNA, ASSI 45/3/2/129; 45/4/1/131; 45/4/2/13; PROB 11/291, fos 281v–282r [3 March 1658/9; proved 21 May 1659]; J. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (London, 1997), 179.

was almost certainly the product of internecine disputes between rival godly camps.¹⁰⁰ A year later, amid an attempt by the godly mayor and MP of Scarborough Luke Robinson (1610–1669) to enforce a campaign of moral reform on the town, allegations of witchcraft were brought before the authorities incriminating a local woman of the crime. On this occasion, however, those promoting the case would appear to have been drawn from the ranks of disgruntled royalists in the town who may have sought to use the trial as a diversionary measure in order to embarrass Robinson and his Cromwellian supporters.¹⁰¹ By the end of the decade, it was becoming more and more difficult to obtain guilty verdicts in witchcraft trials in the county, a state of affairs that elicited widespread comment in 1658, when a verdict of guilt was overturned, either at the instigation of the judge or jury, in the case of a suspected witch from Woodhouse.¹⁰²

It was, I believe, the political complexities that underpinned these trials and associated controversies that led some, like Ady, to caution against witchcraft while others persisted in promulgating such beliefs in the hope that they might help to consolidate godly rule.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, ASSI 47/20/1/512–513. Christopher Legard was a puritan gentleman from nearby Anlaby, who served as a garrison commander at Hull in the civil war. His arrears were paid out of the estates of sequestered royalists: J. T. Cliffe, *Puritanism in Conflict: The Puritan Gentry During and After the Civil Wars* (London and New York, 1988), 31–2. For Robert Wittie (1613–1684), see *ODNB*. This is a case that would undoubtedly repay further study in the archives of the corporation of Kingston-upon-Hull. In addition to acute religious discord, the town was paralysed by political divisions following the refusal of two puritan clergymen to take the Engagement and Parliament's subsequent purge of the aldermanic bench in 1650–51. For a good summary of the religious and political controversies afflicting Hull in the early 1650s, see H. Reece, *The Army in Cromwellian England 1649–1660* (Oxford, 2013), 125–9.

¹⁰¹ M. Y. Ashcroft (ed.), *Scarborough Records 1641–1660. A Calendar* (Northallerton, 1991), 195–7, 197, 198, 199. Luke Robinson (1610–1669) was elected MP for Scarborough in 1645 and continued to sit during the Rump. In 1651–52 he served as bailiff (mayor) of Scarborough, at which time he instituted a programme of puritan moral reform aimed particularly at drunkenness and sabbath breaking: *ODNB*, sub Robinson, Luke; B. S. Capp, *England's Culture Wars: Puritan Reformation and Its Enemies in the Interregnum, 1649–1660* (Oxford, 2012), 22, 185, 227. The royalist sympathies of Margery Fish, the main witness and accuser against Anne Hunnam, the suspected witch, are strongly suggested by the fact that surety for her bail at the sessions was paid by one Tristram Fish, gent. (probably a relation), who in September 1659 was arrested with others on suspicion of involvement (not for the first time) in a recent royalist insurrection in Yorkshire. A prominent figure in the town, he served as bailiff in 1644, 1664, 1670, and 1678: Ashcroft (ed.), *Scarborough Records*, 258. Hunnam's bail, on the other hand, was paid by one Thomas Fiddy, fisherman, who, with Hunnam, just a few months previously, had deposed before the quarter sessions in the town that one of the soldiery had called Mr Bailiff a 'turn coat rogue', 'a rogue in graine', and 'a Cavalier rogue and rascal'. Fiddy served as churchwarden, 1648–49: *ibid.*, 184, 216.

¹⁰² TNA, ASSI 42/1, 3, 15, 41; 44/7; *Mercurius Politicus*, 434–5 [1–8 April 1658]; Anon., *The Most True and Wonderful Narration of Two Women Bewitched in Yorkshire* (London, 1658). The purpose of this pamphlet is unclear. Ostensibly, it was concerned to uphold belief in witchcraft, declaring at the outset that '[t]here are some who are of opinion, That there are no Divells, nor any Witches: but Reason it selfe, and the Rule of Contraries will easily detect that grosse Errour': *ibid.*, A2r–v. It adds no new detail regarding the trial, and is largely confined to providing a translated extract from the work of a Flemish physician, Henricus ab Heer (1570–1636), detailing a similar case. In all probability, its author(s) hoped to save the phenomenon of witchcraft despite the judge's change of heart in this case (though note that the newspaper account strongly suggests that it was the jury, not the judge, who cast doubt upon the evidence of two girls who apparently vomited pins in open court).

In Ady's case, he may have found himself in the minority for if, as I have suggested, he was an ecumenicist intent on forging a union of various mainstream puritan groups with Anglican sympathizers and moderates in the Cromwellian Church, then his approach to witchcraft was unlikely to have assisted these wider aims. It is particularly noticeable, for example, that the proscription of witchcraft featured prominently in the articles of agreement drawn up by numerous county associations in the late 1650s. Most that I have been able to trace, including those for Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, Cumberland, and Westmorland, included provisions that excluded those from receiving communion who either professed the art of witchcraft (white witches) or sought the services of a witch. Others, such as those in Worcestershire and Herefordshire, were spearheaded by men like Richard Baxter and John Beale, whose faith in the reality of witchcraft was both profound and unshakeable.¹⁰³

At the same time, it would appear to be the case that religious and political divisions at all levels of society infected the judicial system, thus making it extremely difficult to secure prosecutions against any malefactor, including witches, whose crime was susceptible to political interpretation and judgement. The death of Cromwell and the ensuing instability culminating in the frenzied events of 1659–60 almost certainly exacerbated these underlying tensions, evidenced by the increasingly ferocious attack on sects such as the witch-like Quakers in these years. In the short term, as we shall see, the Restoration of the monarchy encouraged further debate surrounding the role of witchcraft in the body politic, and the need once again to purge all diabolic influences from the government of Church and state. Witchcraft as a belief and a crime was far from extinct in 1660. There is little doubt, however, that the events of the previous twenty years had helped to sow the seeds of its eventual demise, as discussion of witchcraft became increasingly subordinated to the rhetorical imperative of political argument in these years. In order to understand how the debate over witchcraft was finally resolved and the witch trials came to an end, we now need to turn to the critical period from the Restoration to the Glorious Revolution, which witnessed the demise of the unitary state, embodied in the concept of the body politic, and the beginnings of a genuinely plural society.

¹⁰³ H. W. P. Stevens, 'An Ecclesiastical Experiment in Cambridgeshire, 1656–1658', *English Historical Review*, 10 (1895), 749; Anon., *The Agreement of the Associated Ministers & Churches of Cumberland, and Westmerland* (London, 1658), 14; SARS, DD/PH 205, 45. For Beale, see Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist*, 143–53. I discuss Baxter's lifelong interest in witchcraft in Chapters 5 and 7.

5

Redrawing the Boundaries of the Confessional State

Witchcraft, Dissent, and Latitudinarianism in Restoration England

'Tis the devils great designe to corrupt the brains of men,
when he cannot debauch their lives; the Scriptures mention
not onely the works of the Devil, but the Doctrine of Devils too;
and doubtlesse, there is many a man embraceth the Devils
Doctrines, that seems to renounce his works.

F. Gregory, *Teares and Bloud, or, a Discourse of the Persecution
of Ministers, with motives to Martyrdom and Cautions About It,
Set Forth in Two Sermons, Both Lately Preached in St Mary's in
Oxford* (Oxford, 1660), 11

INTRODUCTION

The Restoration of Charles II in 1660 has traditionally been seen as constituting a major turning point in the political, religious, and cultural life of the nation. Superficially at least, the restoration of the monarchy and the re-establishment of the Anglican Church constituted a return to traditional modes of authority. In practice, however, the legacy of two decades of internecine strife meant that life in Britain under the Stuarts would never allow a return to the certainties of the period before 1642. After 1660, political and religious allegiances grew ever more unstable, nuanced, and liable to fragmentation. At the same time, divisions within the restored body politic continued to fester and occasionally erupt, culminating in the Exclusion Crisis and the Glorious Revolution, and the disintegration of the unitary state. Lack of consensus in Church and state was mirrored by, and in many cases informed, intellectual conflict and debate. The emergence of a vibrant 'public sphere', moreover, encouraged new trends in thought and science that received official recognition in the creation of new bodies such as the Royal Society, founded by Charles II in 1662. Taken together, these developments marked a sea change in the political and cultural life of the nation. Older verities, including witchcraft and related beliefs, were now increasingly subjected to close scrutiny, discussion of which was increasingly framed and shaped by the constantly shifting religious and political preoccupations of

the nation's ruling elite. In part, of course, as I have tried to show, such a process had its roots in the period before 1660. There is little doubt, however, that the period after 1660 saw an intensification of this process, one which ultimately provided the context for a growing reluctance on the part of the powers that be to acknowledge, in public at least, the reality of demonic witchcraft, which, as a crime, had become largely obsolete by the time of the death of Charles II in 1685.

In the remaining chapters of this book, I re-examine the role which some of these broader political, religious, and cultural developments played in undermining belief in the reality of witchcraft and support for witch trials. Traditionally in historical circles, the demise of witchcraft and related phenomena has been closely connected to the spread of the 'new science' as epitomized by the ideas of mechanical philosophers such as Descartes and Hobbes and their followers within bodies such as the Royal Society. Largely discredited today, this idea still occasionally resurfaces, especially in general and popular histories of the period. More recently, witchcraft scholars have focused attention on changes in judicial approaches to witchcraft, especially in relation to legal procedures and evidentiary standards in trials. Here, however, I seek to put forward an alternative explanation for the decline of traditional witchcraft beliefs and associated trials, one in which legal or scientific arguments tending toward scepticism are understood to derive, ultimately, from the broader political and religious developments of the period after 1660. In particular, I aim to show, in line with arguments first proposed by Ian Bostridge, that witchcraft was not argued out of existence. Rather, I suggest that it became increasingly contested, and ultimately obsolete, as a result of its repeated use by those engaged in the feuds and faction-fighting that typified religious and political debate in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. As the law, as well as science in this respect, became increasingly politicized, it is hardly surprising that individual magistrates and natural philosophers sought to adopt legal and scientific arguments in relation to witchcraft that reflected their general religious and political concerns and allegiances.

Broadly speaking, this process of politicization after 1660 had two main elements. In this chapter I seek to show how belief in witchcraft and the discovery and identification of witches became largely confined to those excluded from, or critical of, the Restoration settlement in Church and state. Religious nonconformists in particular were, for a variety of reasons, drawn to upholding a world-view in which the Devil and his agents, including witches, continued to play a prominent role in the everyday affairs of ordinary men and women. Various factors played a role in this process. Here, I lay particular stress on the way in which those who suffered the anguish of exclusion from the restored body politic were inclined to explain such misfortune by recourse to arguments steeped in demonological thinking. Critically, most dissenters, especially those drawn from the ranks of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches, were highly reluctant to accept the idea of permanent exclusion from social, religious, and political power. Many among their leaders actively canvassed for re-admission to mainstream Restoration society, and in so doing they were encouraged by a small but influential group within the re-established Church, labelled by their opponents as latitudinarians, who sought to

construct a more inclusive religious settlement built upon consensus and dialogue. This search for common ground on either side of what was always a permeable and protean religious divide led to collaboration on a number of issues, most notably with respect to this study in relation to witchcraft and demonological speculation.

Whereas politicization for these two groups, eager to redraw the boundaries of the confessional state along consensual lines, translated into support for the idea of witchcraft, it was a different story when it came to the majority of those who opted to uphold religious conformity and remain loyal to the restored government of the Stuarts. In Chapter 6, I examine in detail how prominent spokesmen for this section of the political nation became increasingly reluctant to uphold or invoke traditional notions of witchcraft in an attempt to depict Restoration society as largely free of demonic influence. The Restoration for many, as we shall see, was frequently construed as an act of dispossession, which purged or 'exorcized' the nation of diabolical puritanism. Henceforth, witchcraft and related forms of diabolism became indelibly linked, in the minds of the majority of Anglicans, with rebellion and opposition to the restored regime. At the same time, Anglican ministers, magistrates, and physicians began to demonstrate a growing reluctance to acknowledge individual claims of bewitchment and possession, which ultimately resulted in a marked decline in the legal prosecution of witchcraft. Witchcraft, then, was not so much argued out of existence, but rather redefined to fit the ever-changing circumstances of a nation in flux.

DISPOSSESSING THE NATION: THE RESTORATION AS AN ACT OF EXORCISM

One of the most common tropes of much of the writing in the immediate aftermath of the Restoration concerned the extent to which Britain during the interregnum had become a country possessed. Cromwell and his followers and supporters were routinely castigated as 'state witches' and 'state wizards' who had used their diabolical influence to 'bewitch' the nation. Reworking the biblical text that equated witchcraft with rebellion, loyalist ministers repeatedly reminded their congregations that the enemies of monarchy were in league with the Devil and that the civil war itself had been concocted in Hell. According to the preacher John Douch (d. 1676), there were 'never more witches in England since Monarchy and Hierarchy lay in the dust'. The link was made even more explicit in a sermon preached by John Riland (d. 1673), archdeacon of Coventry, before the mayor of that former rebel stronghold in 1661, when he declared that the French Wars of Religion had produced 30,000 witches, a figure almost certainly exceeded in England's civil wars, 'those being Hell's huge Fair daies'. Thereafter, the era of the civil war became indelibly linked with diabolical witchcraft in the minds of loyalists eager to promote a return to social and political order.¹ Such thinking,

¹ J. Douch, *Englands Jubilee. Or, Her Happy Return from Captivity: In a Sermon, Preached at St Botolphs Aldersgate, London* (London, 1660), A3v; J. Riland, *Elias the Second His Coming to Restore*

moreover, was not confined to elite discourse. Many of the popular celebrations that accompanied the Restoration in 1660 and the subsequent coronation of Charles II in the following year invoked the idea of a nation dispossessed that was no longer in thrall to the Devil and his agents. At Sherborne in Dorset and Oundle in Northamptonshire, effigies of Cromwell and the Marquess of Argyll, dressed as witches, were ritually desecrated and burned. The coronation of Charles II itself incorporated many of these elements of popular demonology, standing as a symbolic re-enactment of the Restoration as an act of divine counter-magic or exorcism.²

There can be little doubt that celebrations such as these, which consistently equated the interregnum and its rulers with demonolatry and witchcraft, attracted widespread support. Such sentiments were even shared by some moderate puritans, many of whom welcomed the return of monarchy and the stability it promised. William Price (d. 1666), for example, depicted the Restoration as a true miracle, unlike those feigned by the Devil, while his colleague William Spurstowe (d. 1666) admonished warring religious factions that they needed 'the alarm of this common enemy [the Devil], to reduce them to order, and unity'.³ Many Presbyterians, in particular, adopted such a posture, partly to avoid retribution but also in a genuine attempt to forge common ground with those Anglicans who supported the return of the old liturgy and rule of bishops. This tendency to demonize the recent past is evident, for instance, in the posthumous publication of the work of the Presbyterian divine John Vicers (1580–1652) who claimed that many, including judges and magistrates who took the Engagement of 1650, were subsequently struck down by a host of inexplicable diseases. Among those so afflicted was one Colonel Russell, who became 'so vexed and distracted, that he . . . found by evident symptoms, that the Devil took actual possession of him, and made him desperately prone to commit any notorious villainy whatsoever'.⁴

Despite the widespread nature of these sentiments after 1660, the Restoration was not in fact accompanied by a marked upsurge in prosecutions for witchcraft. The restored regime did not focus on the discovery and prosecution of 'real'

All Things: Or Gods Way of Reforming by Restoring . . . In Two Sermons (Oxford, 1662), ii ['Moses the Peace-Maker'], 41. The role played by witchcraft in the early years of the Restoration is discussed more fully in P. Elmer, *The Miraculous Conformist: Valentine Greatrakes, the Body Politic, and the Politics of Healing in Restoration Britain* (Oxford, 2013), 120–4.

² Ibid. Archibald Campbell, first marquess of Argyll (1607–1661), was *de facto* head of state in Scotland for much of the interregnum period, and as such, was much maligned in royalist circles. In the same month that his effigy was burnt at Sherborne, another newspaper was reporting that he had been identified as a witch by other witches who were burned at Edinburgh earlier in May 1661: *Kingdom's Intelligencer*, 21 [22–29 May 1661].

³ W. Price, *Gods Working and Britains Wonder* (London, 1660), 9–10; W. Spurstowe, *The Spiritual Chymist* (London, 1666), A6v. Both men were prominent supporters of puritan reformation in the 1640s who became disillusioned with the radical developments of the following decade; see *ODNB*, sub Price, William and Spurstowe, William.

⁴ J. Vicers, *Dagon Demolished* (London, 1660), 6, 12–13. An anonymous edition by the same publisher appeared the same year as *A Looking-Glass for King-Opposers, Or, Twenty Admirable Examples of Gods Severe Justice and Displeasure against the Subscribers of the Late Engagement . . . against Charles II* (London, 1660).

witches, preferring instead, as I suggest in Chapter 6, to root out 'surrogate witches' in the shape of religious and political dissidents. Between 1660 and the end of the century, the desire to discover and punish witches was destined to become a preoccupation of the dissenters, who largely laboured in vain to convince those in authority of the reality of the threat posed by demonic witchcraft. This trend is noticeable both with regard to the overwhelming preponderance of nonconformists engaged in the publication of accounts of witchcraft, as well as their prominence in promoting witch trials. For a brief period they enjoyed the collaborative support of many latitudinarians within the restored Anglican Church. However, it remains the case, as I argue here, that by the end of the seventeenth century belief in witchcraft was inextricably associated with the supporters of dissent.

PROVIDENCE, POLITICS, AND RESTORATION DISSENT

Witchcraft featured prominently in Restoration dissent both in word and deed. Nonconformist preachers and godly laymen were acutely aware of the ever-present threat posed by the Devil and his agents in this world. Their concern for such dangers was undoubtedly exacerbated by the plight which so many found themselves in after 1660, when, excluded from access to power, they were forced to submit to the ignominy of exclusion from participation in the revived body politic of the Stuarts. For many this meant legal persecution, financial distress, and loss of social status. In order to explain or understand God's will in allowing a Restoration settlement that effectively stigmatized the godly as second-class citizens, many turned to providential explanations for consolation. Few nonconformists, regardless of denomination, refuted the idea that God was an ever-active presence in his Creation. His will, in relation to the providential and preternatural actions of the Devil and witches, might work in one of two, often related, ways. In the first place, God might allow the forces of evil to subject the godly to the kinds of physical and mental assaults unleashed on the prophet Job in the Old Testament. Testing the godly in this way encouraged patience and resignation in the face of divine anger for the wider sins of mankind. It also provided, as countless cases of bewitchment and possession attest, an invaluable opportunity for the godly to read and interpret the divine will. And second, God might allow the Devil and his servants to intervene in the affairs of humankind in order to admonish and punish the sinful, including those who persecuted the godly. Witchcraft in the eyes of nonconformists thus constituted a powerful reminder of the sinful nature of Restoration society, as well as an implicit criticism of those who held the reins of power.

The actions of demons and witches thus formed part of a broader providential view of the world, in which it was widely expected and understood that God would communicate with the godly through wonders, both good and evil. Tales of monstrous births and apparitions were thus avidly collected alongside others that recounted in detail the punishments meted out by God to a range of sinners, persecutors, and turncoats. Many of these accounts, moreover, made their way into

print, most notably in the infamous but highly popular collection of special providences published by the Baptist Henry Jessey (1601–1663) in the early years of the Restoration. Others circulated widely in dissenting circles. The fate of persecutory magistrates seems to have been a favourite of the genre. In 1661, for example, correspondence between two nonconformists was intercepted by the government in which great pleasure was taken in the fate of judge Turner, who was struck blind and deaf while on circuit in the Midlands as a result of his ‘severe conduct to poor honest men’. The diary of the Lancashire dissenter Oliver Heywood (1630–1702) is full of such stories, including details of monstrous births, apparitions, witchcraft, and, of course, the providential deaths of persecuting magistrates. He recounts in detail and with some relish the strange death of Colonel Strangeways in 1675, who, having recently ‘struck with ye high canting party in the last sessions’ and being ‘very high against the Nonconformists’, is said to have gone to a feast, and feeling a prick of conscience become ‘discomposed, both in body and mind’. While sitting at table ‘his body burst, his bowells came out & he dyed immediately . . . a remarkable hand of God’.⁵ Similar acts of divine retribution can be found in the biography of Heywood’s brother and fellow minister, Nathaniel Heywood (1633–1677), as well as the writings of the Presbyterian clergyman Richard Baxter.⁶

Accounts of ominous apparitions and rare celestial events were also very popular. Stories of this nature proliferated in dissenting circles after 1660, and were often reported and invoked at times of religious and political crisis. They were not, moreover, restricted to unlearned sections of the dissenting community. The godly Harleys of Brampton Bryan, for example, frequently exchanged news of comets, blazing stars, and apparitions, which they felt portended great changes afoot.⁷ Likewise, the ejected minister John Allin (1623–1683) regaled his nonconformist friends in Rye with innumerable stories of apparitions, comets, and other preternatural occurrences, including the appearance of the Devil during the mayoral election at Southampton in 1665.⁸ One of the most popular ghost stories circulating in the Restoration era emanated from the pen of the Canterbury physician,

⁵ BL, Add. MS 4460, fo. 19v.

⁶ [H. Ashurst], *Some Remarks upon the Life of . . . Nathanael Heywood* (London, 1695), 23–4; M. Sylvester (ed.), *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (London, 1696), iii, 36, 155.

⁷ *HMC. Fourteenth Report, Appendix, Part II; MSS of the Duke of Portland*, vol. 3 (London, 1894), 289, 354. The private, contemplative nature of many of these reports gives the lie to the idea that they were recycled merely for propagandistic purposes. The ejected Devon clergyman Thomas Larkham, for example, recorded in his diary that on 10 December 1664 he rose early to ‘see the blazing starr - a sign (doubtlesse) of Gods displeasure for Englands sinnes’; S. H. Moore (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Larkham, 1647–1669* (Woodbridge, Church of England Record Soc., 17, 2011), 270.

⁸ ESxRO, FRE 5426 [Allin to Philip Frith, 27 December 1664]; 5444 [same to same, 31 March 1665]; 5437 [same to same, 24 February 1665/6]; 5488 [same to same, 12 December 1665]; 5490 [same to same, 20 December 1665]; 5494 [same to same, 2 January 1665/6]; 5504 [same to same, 3 February 1665/6]; 5505 [6 February 1665/6]; 5574 [same to same, 4 May 1667]; 5589 [same to same, 31 December 1667]; 5602 [same to same, 4 July 1668]; 5621 [same to same, 20 December 1669]. For Allin, see *ODNB* and D. Bilak, ‘Alchemy and the End Times: Revelations from the Laboratory and Library of John Allin, Puritan Alchemist (1623–1683)’, *Ambix*, 60 (2013), 390–414. For the Devil at Southampton, see below, 282.

exclusionist MP, and nonconformist sympathizer William Jacob (c.1623–1692).⁹ Jacob first began to circulate a description of his encounter with the ghost of his cousin, Henry Jacob (1605–1652), a former fellow of Merton College, sometime around the end of December 1672, when he wrote letters to both Anthony Wood and John Aubrey on the subject.¹⁰ Seven years later, in August 1679, he provided his friend and fellow doctor John Locke with a detailed account of the haunting of his house at Canterbury, which Locke proceeded to enter in full in his journal.¹¹

As the Jacob case suggests, interest in such phenomena became particularly acute in the period from the late 1670s onwards, when the concerns of the dissenters began to merge with the fears of political dissidents who wished to exclude the Catholic James, duke of York, from the succession. In 1677 a godly woman from Lothbury, on the evidence of a blazing star and whale, predicted the poisoning of the King, an alteration in religion, and the deliverance of the Protestants at the hands of the duke of Buckingham, earl of Salisbury and duke of Monmouth.¹² During the Exclusion Crisis itself, sparked by the ‘murder’ of the Protestant magistrate Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey (1621–1678), nonconformists, moderate Anglicans, and radical Whigs eagerly scanned the heavens for signs of divine support. Blazing stars and comets created great excitement and were taken special notice of by men like the dissenter Laurence Lee at Godalming in Surrey and the radical Whig John Cary of Bristol in their private papers.¹³ They also feature prominently in the work of the pro-Whig cleric William Greene, who was responsible for publishing a collection of providences in 1680.¹⁴ A year later the fiery Congregationalist minister Christopher Nesse (1621–1705) published a further collection of providential and prodigious occurrences in which he drew on a range

⁹ For Jacob’s support for exclusion and Dissent, see especially B. Henning (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1660–1690*, 3 vols (London, 1983), ii, 639; CSPD, 1682, 250. His nonconformist allegiances are further suggested by his friendship with one of his patients, Thomas Markwick of Rye, with whom he corresponded in 1682. Markwick was a close friend and acquaintance of the dissenter Samuel Jeake of Rye: ESxRO, FRE 5365 [Jacob to Markwick, 28 July 1682]; M. Hunter and A. Gregory (eds), *An Astrological Diary of the Seventeenth Century: Samuel Jeake of Rye 1652–1699* (Oxford, 1988), 31, 33, 61 and *passim*.

¹⁰ Bodl., MS Wood F 42, fo. 286 [Jacob to Wood, 17 December 1672]; J. Aubrey, *Miscellanies* (London, 1696), 68 [original letter dated 1673]. Jacob had begun a correspondence with Aubrey in that year: see Bodl., Aubrey MS 12, 234–5 [Jacob to Aubrey, 11 April 1673].

¹¹ BL, Add. MS 15,642, fos 102r–v [entry dated 26 August 1679]. The two men would appear to have met in 1679 when Jacob acted as Locke’s physician when the latter fell ill on a visit to Kent. The two men subsequently corresponded on medical and other matters: E. S. de Beer (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Locke*, 8 vols (Oxford, 1978–89), ii, 80–1, 95, 259–60.

¹² CSPD, 1677–1678, 174–5, 412–13.

¹³ H. Jenkinson, ‘A Late Surrey Chronicler (Surrey and the Revolution, 1688)’, *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, 27 (1914), 9; BL, Add. MS 5540, fo. 112 [including detailed drawings and descriptions of the blazing stars of 1680 and 1682, which Cary compared to those seen in London prior to the plague in 1664]. For Cary, a celebrated writer on trade and economic affairs and a ‘great friend to Republicks’, according to his Tory admirer Edmund Bohun, see *ODNB* and J. Barry, ‘The “Great Projector”: John Cary and the Legacy of Puritan Reform in Bristol, 1647–1720’, in M. Pelling and S. Mandelbrote (eds), *The Practice of Reform in Health, Medicine, and Science, 1500–2000. Essays for Charles Webster* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2005), 185–206.

¹⁴ W. G[reene], *Memento’s to the World, or, an Historical Collection of Divers Wonderful Comets and Prodigious Signs in Heaven* (London, 1680).

of demonological experts in order to authenticate contemporary accounts of witchcraft and related phenomena.¹⁵ Nesse was especially keen to publicize the case of Elizabeth Freeman of Hatfield in Hertfordshire, who claimed to have received a number of politically sensitive messages from an apparition. Two earlier pamphlets on the case prompted the government to react swiftly in examining those responsible in an attempt to clamp down on further speculation as to the motives of those involved.¹⁶

Accounts of apparitions were particularly popular among religious and political dissidents, as disembodied spirits frequently voiced ideas and opinions that were otherwise actionable at law or politically sensitive.¹⁷ The case of the so-called 'demon of Spreyton' in Devon, the subject of a short pamphlet in 1683, fits this category. The author Richard Bovet was either a former republican army officer who was involved in various plots against the restored government of Charles II for more than two decades, or a relation (son or nephew) of the self-styled Colonel. He was also the author of an important collection of demonological stories published under the Miltonic title of *Pandaemonium* in 1684, a volume that, according to Jonathan Barry, forms 'part of a body of work which used the sensational theme of witchcraft to sell to fellow Whigs a diet of anti-papal diatribes'.¹⁸ There is also little doubt that reports of comets, and the appearance of angels and spirits, were often invoked by religious and political dissidents as a call to arms. In 1670, the account of an apparition was found in the possession of a Scottish rebel near Durham. According to a local magistrate, who sent the papers up to London, it described how an apparition, with a ghostly army, was to 'lead the people to expect rebellion'.¹⁹ Likewise, in 1686 a government spy in Holland claimed that the rebels

¹⁵ C. N[esse], *The Signs of the Times, or, Wonderful Signs of Wonderful Times being a Faithfull Collection and Impartial Relation of Several Signs and Wonders, Call'd Properly Prodigies . . . All of which have Hapned within the Compass of this Last Year 1680* (London, 1681).

¹⁶ [R. Wilkinson], *A True and Perfect Relation of Elizabeth Freeman of Bishops-Hatfield in the County of Hertford, of a Strange and Wonderful Apparition . . . January 27 1680* (London, 1681); [R. Wilkinson], *Strange News from Bishop-Hatfield in Hertfordshire January the 25 1680* (London, 1681). The Privy Council ordered the publishers and eye witnesses, including local landowners, a clergyman, and the schoolteacher, Richard Wilkinson, to appear before them to answer for their actions in attesting to Freeman's claims; TNA, PC 2/69, 203.

¹⁷ Cf. Jacqueline Pearson, who has recently commented on the ability of ghosts and spirits to articulate the unspeakable, both socially and politically: J. Pearson, '"Then She Asked It, What Were Its Sisters Names?": Reading Between the Lines in Seventeenth-Century Pamphlets of the Supernatural', *Seventeenth Century*, 28 (2013), 63. Much the same might be said of demoniacs.

¹⁸ [R. Bovet], *A Narrative of the Demon of Spraiton* (London, 1683); [R. Bovet], *Pandaemonium, or, The Devil's Cloyster being a Further Blow to Modern Sadduceism, Proving the Existence of Witches and Spirits* (London, 1684). For Bovet, see especially J. Barry, 'The Politics of *Pandaemonium*', in J. Newton and J. Bath (eds), *Witchcraft and the Act of 1604* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2008), 181–206 [quote at 193], reproduced in J. Barry, *Witchcraft and Demonology in South-West England, 1640–1789* (Basingstoke, 2012), 103–23 [quote at 113]. It is worth noting that Thomas Malthus, one of the printers of *Pandaemonium*, was also responsible for producing another work by Nesse entitled *The Devils Patriark* (London, 1683), a book that Barry describes as one in which 'the association of diabolism with popery, set in the context of priestcraft, plots and hellish policies' is uppermost: Barry, 'Politics of *Pandaemonium*', 191; Barry, *Witchcraft and Demonology*, 111.

¹⁹ CSPD, 1670, with Addenda 1660–1670, 320.

there were planning to publish an account of an angelic visitation 'to an honest man in ye west of England' prophesying bloodshed and regime change.²⁰

Many of these stories were clearly works of fiction. Some, however, had a basis in real events, as is evident from a story circulating in nonconformist circles in 1677–78 and published anonymously the following year, relating to the appearance of a spectre at Exeter.²¹ The scene of the haunting was an inn named the Bell, which was in the possession of the widow of one John Holder. In the unpublished account, the ghost of a gentleman, who had been murdered some thirty years previously while staying at the Bell, now appeared demanding vengeance and legal redress. Suspicion for the murder of the ghost fell firmly on the Holders. What makes the case particularly interesting is the fact that John Holder, the deceased owner of the inn, had been a staunch supporter of Charles I whose hostelry was a well-known centre of royalist intrigue in the early stages of the civil war. Moreover, in 1642 the royalist cleric Anthony Turner (d. 1646) had been arrested at Holder's tavern on suspicion of murdering the parliamentary muster master, Nicholas Vaughan. Over thirty years later, folk memory of these events, combined with renewed political agitation, would appear to have given new lease of life to a ghost story that was surely intended to discredit the proto-Tory cause in Exeter.²²

It is perhaps not surprising then that the government and its various agents, scattered up and down the land, were highly sensitive to such stories and did their best to report and arrest those responsible for spreading rumours of apparitions and prodigies. Typically, the government correspondent at Swansea, a local clergyman called John Man, filed various tales that included a monstrous birth, comet, and the odd behaviour of fish.²³ Similar stories, more often than not emanating from dissenting circles, were reported at Ipswich in Suffolk,²⁴ and Honiton and Plymouth in Devon.²⁵ Not surprisingly, the response to such incidents often split communities, which subsequently divided on confessional lines. This was especially

²⁰ BL, Add. MS 41,818, fo. 280v.

²¹ CSPD, 1682, 604–5 [miscellaneous]; Anon., *The Wonder of This Age: Or God's Miraculous Revenge against Murder* (London, 1678). The publisher, in all probability, was the prominent Whig Benjamin Harris, who was responsible for promoting the 'miraculous' healing claims of the duke of Monmouth in 1679. His name was attached to a further collection of miracle stories in 1681, though these were probably falsely ascribed, part of a Tory campaign designed to embarrass the Whigs in the heat of the Exclusion Crisis: H. Weber, *Paper Bullets: Print and Kingship under Charles II* (Lexington, 1996), 233n.

²² DRO, ECA C1/63, fo. 345v; C1/64, fos 16v–17r, 25v–26r; M. A. E. Green (ed.), *Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding &c., 1643–1660*, 5 vols (London, 1889–92) ii, 1397. Holder's son, Richard, was a wealthy woollen draper and Tory common councilman in London: J. R. Woodhead, *The Rulers of London, 1660–1689* (London, 1966), 91.

²³ CSPD, 1673–1675, 482–3; CSPD, 1678, 116. Between 1660 and 1684 Swansea was a haven for dissenters and dissenting ministers as the Corporation Act did not apply there: P. Jenkins, 'Tory Industrialism and Town Politics: Swansea in the Eighteenth Century', *Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), 103–23.

²⁴ *Intelligencer*, 54 [12 October 1663], which reported that the 'Phanatiques were very busy with their Prodiges and Prophecies', the work of unnamed ejected ministers: TNA, SP 29/165/22 and 221 [phantom ship, 1666].

²⁵ TNA, SP 29/120/24 [Honiton]; CSPD, 1670, with Addenda 1660–1670, 329 [sighting of vision, Plymouth, 1670]. Honiton was later the site of a witchcraft incident that created quite a stir in local nonconformist circles; see below, 213–14.

true during times of acute political and religious unrest. A prime example was the case of Martha Taylor of Derbyshire, whose 'miraculous' fasting in 1668 ignited a contentious and often fractious debate between moderate nonconformists, who sought to authenticate Taylor's experiences as an extraordinary 'wonder', and their Anglican opponents, who chose to deride Taylor's claims and dismiss her as a fraud. The case itself is worthy of further reflection as it prefigures, in so many ways, the approach that contemporaries commonly adopted when faced with alleged incidents of witchcraft.²⁶

A key feature of the Taylor affair, common to so many witchcraft trials, relates to the manner in which the bodies of sufferers (abstinent, witch, or witch's victim) acted as a cipher or vehicle for the expression of a range of sentiments, including in this case the communal anxiety and suffering experienced by those who rejected the authority of the restored Church. Sick and tormented bodies, whether those of anorexic girls or bewitched children, stood as a visible sign of divine grace or displeasure, proof in the eyes of many of the disordered nature of the contemporary body politic.²⁷ For nonconformists and others opposed to persecution, the 'miraculous' preservation of Taylor was widely perceived as an endorsement of dissent and an indictment of those in authority.²⁸ In the eyes of conformist opponents, however, incidents of this kind represented a threat or challenge to the status quo, and were thus to be refuted and frequently derided. In either case, the body of the individual at the centre of the controversy, be they abstinent, witch, or witch's victim, was liable to close scrutiny and forensic examination, often at the hands of a learned physician or magistrate. Critically, as Simon Schaffer notes, 'medico-juridical decisions' and reports in such cases 'were never innocent but polemical, because of their widespread use in political and religious debate'. As a result, physicians and magistrates consulted in episodes such as this more often than not adopted the party line and pronounced accordingly. In the case of Martha Taylor, for example, Presbyterian sympathizers, including doctors and ministers, who would appear to have monopolized support for the young maid, were unanimous in declaring that Taylor's feats of fasting were out of the ordinary or preternatural (like witchcraft). Defenders of the status quo, on the other hand, such as the Anglican apologist and physician Nathaniel Johnston (for whom, see below, pp. 255–6), were adamant that Taylor was a fraud, and that the case should be subjected to a royal commission.

²⁶ The case generated a great deal of interest, both locally and nationally, as well as a number of pamphlets. For an excellent overall assessment of the episode, see S. Schaffer, 'Piety, Physic and Prodigious Abstinence', in O. P. Grell and A. Cunningham (eds), *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 1996), 171–203. Also helpful is J. Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (New Haven, CT and London, 2006), 104–18. For the contribution of the ejected minister John Reynolds to this debate, see below, 202.

²⁷ I discuss saintly and demonic bodies more fully in Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist*, 111–15.

²⁸ For further evidence of the widespread interest in the Taylor case, particularly among the dissenters (not cited in Schaffer), see Bodl., Add. MS C 305, fo. 292; *Gentleman's Magazine* (1794), 11–12. The latter contains a letter written by the Devon radical and schoolmaster Zachary Mayne (1631–1694), in which he refers to two further accounts of Martha Taylor. Mayne later featured as a prominent witness to an act of witchcraft at Honiton (discussed further below, 213–14).

Given the predilection of nonconformists after 1660 for providentialist episodes of this kind, it is hardly surprising to discover that some of the most enthusiastic defenders of the reality of witchcraft and the need to punish witches in Restoration Britain came from within the dissenting community. Dissenters promoted such beliefs in a variety of ways. Accounts of witchcraft and bewitchment were assiduously collected by, and disseminated among, nonconformists, often finding their way into print. Others focused on more theoretical aspects of the phenomenon, producing learned demonologies for public consumption. Above all, detailed examination of many of the dwindling number of trials for witchcraft after 1660 reveals that nonconformists figured disproportionately as victims and witnesses in such cases. The overwhelming balance of this evidence suggests that in the period after 1660, when witchcraft and related beliefs were clearly under threat, the most vocal and committed defenders of the idea of witchcraft and the reality of witches emanated from within the dissenting fraternity.

WITCHCRAFT, DEMONOLOGY, AND RESTORATION DISSENT

One of the clearest evidences for such a fascination with witchcraft on the part of dissenters comes from the large number of published works that they produced on the subject after 1660. These came in various forms. They included full-blown demonological treatises that were concerned, primarily, with defending Christianity from the threat of atheism and Sadducism. Typical of this genre was Richard Baxter's *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*. Not published until 1691, it represented a lifetime's work and passion and included material collected in the main from Baxter's dissenting friends and colleagues (discussed in more detail below). Less conventional but equally influential were journals such as the *Athenian Oracle*, published by the nonconformist John Dunton (1659–1732), which appeared between 1691 and 1697 and frequently commented upon its readers' concern with the supernatural in general, and witchcraft in particular. Its tone, in keeping with much other dissenting writing on the subject, was consistently 'credulous'. Sceptics were given short shrift as the editor and his anonymous assistants consistently argued for the reality of ghosts and witches, reprinting evidence from the recent trials at Salem in America.²⁹ Other nonconformist ministers that aspired to place belief in spirits, witches, and the Devil upon a firm footing include Richard Gilpin and John Flavel.

In 1677, Gilpin (1625–1700), one of the leading spokesmen for dissent in the north-east of England, produced a lengthy treatise devoted to exposing the errors of atheists and the ungodly in denying the existence and wiles of Satan. While

²⁹ P. K. Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven, CT and London, 2013), 121. Dunton was the son-in-law of the nonconformist minister Samuel Annesley (1620–1696), who had been ejected as vicar of St Giles, Cripplegate, London, in 1662: *ODNB*, sub Dunton, John.

witchcraft per se formed only a small part of Gilpin's discourse, which had originally been delivered as a series of sermons in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the demonological notions that underpinned belief in witches and spirits were widely discussed and reaffirmed. Gilpin's overriding aim, as Jonathan Westaway has convincingly argued in the *ODNB*, was primarily to examine the range of weapons at Satan's disposal in his assault against the godly. If anything, he downplays witchcraft and possession as a major threat at the present time, preferring instead, in what was standard practice for Protestant demonologists, to avoid the pitfall of exaggerating the power of Satan and undermining that of God in the providential supervision of humankind.³⁰ In part, such thinking was informed by the success of evangelical Protestantism in spreading the word. Diabolical witchcraft was by and large confined to the more pagan and remote parts of the world, especially the Americas. Consequently, the Devil, in order to capture the hearts and souls of godly Christians, was forced into a change of strategy. For Gilpin and many others like him, this was most readily apparent by the manner in which Satan had encouraged fellow Protestants, including radical sectaries and ceremonialist Anglicans, to subvert and in some cases openly persecute the godly (synonymous with moderate dissent). 'Spiritual fascination', a species of witchcraft, was thus responsible for ensnaring many fellow Protestants, including the Quakers and other radical 'fanatics' and 'enthusiasts'. At the same time, the Devil prompted those in authority, often of the same blood and kin of the dissenters, to persecute the godly. Satan, through God's permission, thus worked in a variety of ways, including diabolical possession and witchcraft, to test the saints, which Gilpin had witnessed at first hand.³¹

Flavel (c.1630–1691) was the author of a similar work aimed at establishing the true nature of spirit and the pre-eminence of the human soul. In his *Pneumatologia* of 1685, he nonetheless defended belief in witches as part of a wider strategy to convince the atheistically inclined of the existence of spirits, both good and bad, in the sublunary world (citing in the process the recently published work of Joseph Glanvill and Henry More). Echoing the work of an earlier generation of demonologists, Flavel stressed the need for contemporaries to acknowledge that we are 'under much darkness as to the way and manner of the converse of Spirits with us'. He went on to argue that most spirits were not the ghosts of the recently departed, but rather angels or demons, especially the latter:

Unquiet Spirits have their Walks in this World, they compass the whole earth, and walk up and down in it . . . they can assume any shape, yea, I doubt not but he can act their Bodies when dead, as well as he did their souls and Bodies when alive: how great his power is this way, appears in what is so often done by him in the Bodies of Witches. They are not ordinarily therefore the Spirits of men, but other Spirits that appear to us.³²

³⁰ The point is well made by Simon Davies in his 'The Reception of Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*: Witchcraft, Magic and Radical Religion', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 74 (2013), 384–6.

³¹ R. Gilpin, *Daemonologia Sacra, or, a Treatise of Satans Temptations. In Three Parts* (London, 1677), ii, 231 [pretended Catholic exorcism at Durham]; iii, 92 [diabolical levitation at Newcastle].

³² J. Flavel, *Pneumatologia. A Treatise of the Soul of Man* (London, 1685), 262–9 [quote at 269]. For Flavel, see *ODNB*. In 1659, Flavel had instigated a formal accusation of witchcraft against two Quakers in Dartmouth: P. Elmer, "'Saints or Sorcerers': Quakerism, Demonology and the Decline of

Flavel's pneumatology almost certainly grew out of his earlier interest in the nature of providence, especially his desire to convince atheists of the reality of the special providences that befell the godly. In *Divine Conduct*, published in 1678, he makes it clear that it is not the out-and-out atheist he is attempting to convince and redeem, but rather those who ascribe all those special providences championed by the nonconformists to 'natural events, or meer contingencies'. These, he claimed, were the majority, and what is more were to be equated with the most vociferous opponents of dissent.³³ Similar motives were shared by Flavel's near neighbour and fellow nonconformist Richard Burthogge (1638–1705), who in 1694 published yet another treatise defending belief in the existence of spirits, which cited, among others, Bodin, Glanvill, and Baxter ('as Sagacious and Inquisitive a person as any') in defence of the reality of witchcraft. Burthogge, a physician by profession, was more than willing to accept that many cases of witchcraft might be put down to imposture. He was equally convinced, however, that others were genuine, citing a lengthy case culled from a work on the West Indies as well as alluding to 'the Confessions I have in Manuscript . . . of a great number of Witches (some of which were Executed) that were taken by a Justice of Peace in Cornwall above thirty Years agoe'. Unfortunately, despite suggesting that he might publish these at a later date as part of a larger work on the supernatural ('all original Papers, and well vouched'), they never saw the light of day.³⁴

Interest in promoting belief in witchcraft and spirits in print thus constituted an important aspect of nonconformist writing in the period after 1660, and was not confined to England. In Wales, for example, the ejected minister Stephen Hughes (d. 1688) was responsible for producing Welsh translations of the *Demon of Mascon* and Henry Holland's *Treatise of Witchcraft*, both published in 1681.³⁵ Hughes was a prodigious translator and was also responsible, among other things, for producing Welsh editions of various works by Richard Baxter. Indeed, it is highly likely that Hughes and two of his collaborators, Samuel Jones (1628–1697) and Daniel Higgs (d. 1691), were actively involved in Baxter's own project to collect stories of witchcraft, many of which were later published in the latter's *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*. It is also tempting to speculate that the Daniel Higgs who published an account of a case of witchcraft in Ireland in 1698 was related to his ministerial namesake. The stated aim of the work—to refute atheists and Sadducees—and the allusion in the frontispiece to the 'world of spirits' strongly suggests that Higgs was consciously invoking the authority of Baxter.³⁶ Interest in witchcraft and

Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century England', in J. Barry, M. Hester, and G. Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge, 1996), 151.

³³ J. Flavel, *Divine Conduct, or the Myserie of Providence wherein the Being and Efficacy of Providence is Asserted and Vindicated* (London, 1678).

³⁴ R. Burthogge, *An Essay upon Reason, and the Nature of Spirits* (London, 1694), 177–96. For Burthogge, who suffered frequently for his nonconformity, see *ODNB*. The case in Cornwall referred to here is almost certainly that cited by fellow Devon physician Robert Vilvain in 1654, discussed in Chapter 4, note 50.

³⁵ For Hughes, see *ODNB*.

³⁶ R. Baxter, *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits* (London, 1691), 20, 27–32, 33–4; D. Higgs, *The Wonderful and True Relation of the Bewitching a Young Girl in Ireland* (1699). For Jones, see *ODNB*.

apparitions among Welsh dissenters continued well into the eighteenth century, culminating in the publication of another major collection of spirit testimonies by the dissenting minister Edmund Jones (1702–1793) in 1780. Many of these dated back to the second half of the seventeenth century, and virtually all emanated from dissenting circles.³⁷

One of the central features of this growing appetite for stories of witchcraft, spirits, and related phenomena was the extent to which such incidents were avidly collected and circulated in dissenting circles across vast distances. America, as we have already noted, was a veritable treasure trove of evidence for those writing demonologies. Communication, however, moved in both directions. In the ‘dark days’ of 1684, for example, Samuel Petto (c.1624–1711), a Congregational minister in Suffolk with a long interest in the preternatural, was regaling the New England puritan Increase Mather (1639–1723) with tales of recent remarkable cases, including one of witchcraft, for inclusion in the latter’s ‘design concerning Providences’.³⁸ Six years later, Richard Baxter offered to send Mather further ‘scraps’ on the subject for inclusion in a later edition of the latter’s *Illustrious Providences*.³⁹

While some of the authors cited above were disinterested in the collection of actual incidents of witchcraft, most were actively engaged in the reporting and verification of such ‘matters of fact’. In doing so, they had a large pool of evidence to draw upon, much of it emanating from within the dissenting community. One of the most notable features of so many of the trials for witchcraft in this period is the extent to which they featured nonconformists, more often than not as the victims of, or witnesses to, acts of *maleficium*. One of the most publicized took place at Bury St Edmunds in 1662, when the two daughters of Samuel Pacey, a wealthy nonconformist merchant from Lowestoft, testified against two local women whom they accused of bewitching them. The trial took place at a highly sensitive moment for local dissenters, who, Pacey included, were then beginning to experience the first effects of the new legislation aimed at enforcing conformity to the restored Church.⁴⁰ The trial of the Lowestoft witches, which attracted widespread interest throughout East Anglia, was also attended by local clergymen, some of whom would shortly be ejected from their livings. Samuel Petto and William Bidbank, for example, would later claim that while present in the courtroom they

For Higgs, see *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Both Jones and Higgs had strong links with Swansea, the site of numerous providential sightings after the Restoration (see note 23, this chapter).

³⁷ E. Jones, *A Relation of Apparitions of Spirits in the Principality of Wales* (Trevecca?, 1780). For Jones, see ODNB and J. Barry, *Raising Spirits: How a Conjuror’s Tale Was Transmitted Across the Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, 2013), 67–73.

³⁸ *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 4th ser., vol. 8 (Boston, MA, 1868), 349–50 [8 October 1684]. Petto had witnessed the famous trial of the Lowestoft witches in 1662 and would later produce a dramatic account of the bewitchment of a colleague, Thomas Spatchet, not published until 1693 (discussed more fully, below).

³⁹ DWL, Baxter Letters, vol. 1, fo. 217 [Baxter to Mather, c. November 1690]. The first edition of Mather’s *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* had appeared at Boston in 1684.

⁴⁰ Anon., *A Tryal of Witches, at the Assizes Held at Bury St. Edmonds . . . Tenth Day of March, 1664. Before Sir Matthew Hale* (London, 1682). For a detailed discussion of all aspects of the trial, including Pacey’s nonconformity, see G. Geis and I. Bunn, *A Trial of Witches: A Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Prosecution* (London and New York, 1997).

saw various victims, 'not only Dissenters but also others', suffer 'Torturing Fits' and vomit pins.⁴¹ On other occasions, nonconformist ministers were specially called in to offer advice to those similarly afflicted. In 1663, four ministers in Cornwall, all recently removed or ejected from their livings, successfully exorcized a young boy from Landrake, near Saltash. A short pamphlet published the following year lauded their achievement. Despite the fact 'some said it was the Fanaticks' work' and others that it was a 'Presbyterian juggle', the anonymous author was pleased to note that 'the more sober and wiser sort, and those in power... did acknowledge themselves fully satisfied'.⁴²

Cases of diabolical possession such as this, whether through the agency of the Devil or his accomplice, the witch, provided a platform that allowed the godly to demonstrate, in the face of persecution, the righteousness of their cause. In the eyes of many Restoration nonconformists, the contorted bodies of those afflicted by the forces of evil thus provided both a critical commentary on the wider body politic as well as a comforting solution to their current plight. The process is particularly evident in the sufferings endured by the Suffolk dissenter Thomas Spatchet, whose witchcraft-induced fits in the 1660s so closely mirrored the vicissitudes of official religious policy as implemented in East Anglia in the same period. The providential nature of his misfortunes is unmistakable. As a leading member of the borough corporation of Dunwich, Spatchet was miraculously struck dumb by a local witch just weeks before he was due to take the requisite oath of allegiance to the restored regime. He was also a lay preacher who suffered the remarkable touch of good fortune to become totally immobilized at the precise moment the Five Mile Act became law. Equally marvelous were his recoveries, which unfailingly coincided with the issue of royal indulgences or imminent likelihood of a change in government policy favouring religious comprehension. Spatchet's Job-like behaviour in the face of these afflictions was in itself a remarkable testament to the sanctity of the godly, who, in the face of adversity, undoubtedly drew comfort from such spectacles.⁴³

Adversity, including the threat, real or imagined, of loss of office and status, was particularly evident as a factor in many of these early Restoration episodes of diabolism. It can clearly be seen at work in the case of the witch of Youghal in Ireland in 1661, where most of the victims and witnesses were prominent members of the corporation or tainted by their close engagement with the Cromwellian

⁴¹ S. Petto, *A Faithful Narrative of the Wonderful and Extraordinary Fits which Mr Tho. Spatchet... was Under by Witchcraft: Or, a Mysterious Providence in His Even Unparallel'd Fits* (London, 1693), unpaginated 'Preface to the Christian Reader'. For Bidbank, see *Cal. Rev.*, 53.

⁴² Anon., *A Return of Prayer: Or A Faithful Relation of Some Remarkable Passages of Providence Concerning Thomas Sawdie... who was Possessed with an Unclean Spirit* (1664). The four ministers were Nicholas Tyacke (d. 1687), who seems to have overseen the dispossession, and his three assistants, William Toms (d. 1681), John Lydston (1613–1671), and Thomas Travers (d. 1677 or 1678), for whom see *Cal. Rev.*, 331, 488, 491, 499. Strangely, the pamphlet makes no mention of the well-known puritan preacher Gaspar Hicke (1605–1677), a former member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, who was ejected from the parish of Landrake in 1662. Tyacke, Travers, and Hicke had all served as members of the Cornish Association in the late 1650s.

⁴³ Petto, *Faithful Narrative*; P. Elmer, 'Towards a Politics of Witchcraft in Early Modern England', in S. Clark (ed.), *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke, 2001), 112.

regime of the previous decade.⁴⁴ At roughly the same time, the city of Exeter experienced a wave of witchcraft trials in which former puritans featured prominently. In the summer of 1660, Margaret Lake deposed before local magistrates that she was suffering from a series of fits that she and a number of neighbours attributed to a local witch, Bridget Wotton.⁴⁵ Lake herself and her husband John would later be prosecuted for their religious and political nonconformity.⁴⁶ They, however, were relatively obscure and small fry. Not so John Deeble, who tried but failed to carry the suspected witch upstairs to confront her accuser. Deeble was the son of Walter Deeble, a prominent member of the corporation in the 1650s, who had played a crucial role in various initiatives designed to relieve the city's poor, including the creation of a public workhouse in 1652–53. He had also amassed a small fortune in the process, leading some critics in 1660 to speculate openly as to Deeble's involvement, as auditor of accounts, in corrupt practice and to question his fitness to hold high office in the city (he was sheriff at the time of the witchcraft allegations).⁴⁷ Unlike a number of his colleagues, Deeble did not welcome the Restoration. He was eventually forced out of office by the Corporation Act commissioners in 1662, though not before selling his stake in the old workhouse for a substantial profit.⁴⁸ Further evidence that the case against Wotton was largely the product of puritan anxieties at this worrying time for the city's godly is suggested by the fact that in early 1661 Wotton informed a magistrate that she feared for her life at the hands of Alice Follett, a woman with close links, via her sister, to the corporation's godly hierarchy.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist*, 127–32.

⁴⁵ DRO, ECA C/1/65 [Exeter QS Order Book, 1660–72], fos 1v–2v, 3v, 4r, 21v.

⁴⁶ John and Margaret Lake were presented by the churchwardens of St David's, Exeter, for failing to attend their parish church in 1668. Two years later, John was fined for attending a conventicle at nearby Newton St Cyres. Finally, in the aftermath of Monmouth's rebellion in 1685, Margaret was brought before the mayor for spreading false rumours about the whereabouts of the duke: DRO, Churchwardens' presentments, Box 13/1; QS 1/10 [Devon QS Order Book, 1661–70], 12 June 1670; ECA C/1/66, fo. 113v.

⁴⁷ In 1660, some among the citizenry were openly expressing the view that 'the Chamber had cozened the poore' of more than £4,000; DRO, ECA C/1/65, fos 7v–8r. Deeble's rapid rise to prominence in the corporation and subsequent involvement in charitable schemes can be charted in the city's act book. Among other perks of the office, he also purchased the parish church of St Kerrian's, declared redundant by a chamber initiative to reduce the number of parishes in Exeter; DRO, ECA 10 [Exeter Chamber Act Book, 1652–63], fos 2v, 5r, 24v, 43r, 43v, 44r, 55v, 56r, 87r, 197v, 124r. For a recent account of Exeter in the 1650s, which stresses the broad success of the city's puritan rulers in promoting the cause of godly, moral reform, see B. S. Capp, *England's Culture Wars: Puritan Reformation and Its Enemies in the Interregnum, 1649–1660* (Oxford, 2012), 240–56.

⁴⁸ Deeble's signature is missing from the 'very loyal petition' of the chamber addressed to the King on 21 May 1660, and he was absent from the chamber when Charles II was proclaimed King a week later: DRO, ECA 10, fos 133v–134r, 135v. He last appeared in the chamber on 5 August 1662. Thereafter, he continued to be harassed by the reconstituted corporation with regard to his failure to supply audited accounts for his year in office as receiver general: *ibid.*, fos 136r–v, 138v, 152v, 154v, 165v; ECA 11 [Exeter Chamber Act Book, 1663–84], 3.

⁴⁹ DRO, ECA C/1/65, fo. 21v. Follett's sister Ann Palmer, who died in 1662, left her several legacies alongside other bequests to the city's godly ministers, including Thomas Powell (ejected at St Sidwell's later the same year). She also named her two 'trustie and welbeloved friends', Simon Snow and John Pym, both close puritan colleagues of Walter Deeble, as overseers of her will: TNA, PROB 11/308, fos 282r–v [24 March 1661/2; proved 27 June 1662].

It is possible that the case against Bridget Wotton was partly a product of sectarian tensions in the city. A few years earlier, a Quaker visitor to the city was imprisoned on a charge of witchcraft. Similar infighting at Sherborne in Dorset seems to have produced another witchcraft scare at about the same time in which a large number of local Quakers were widely reported to have assembled as witches in the town and plotted to kill the local minister.⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, the puritans' Anglican opponents made great profit from such stories, citing them as proof that the so-called godly were just as likely as others to suffer punishment at the hands of a providential deity.⁵¹ The evidence from witchcraft trials across the country in the years after 1660 confirms nonetheless a striking pattern in which dissenters and former Cromwellians figure prominently as the witnesses to, and victims of, diabolical malevolence. In the case of Jonas Cudworth, a Newcastle draper, displaced guilt and a desire to seek re-admission to the ranks of corporate government may have informed his decision to go to law against a local witch for bewitching his children in 1661. In the 1650s Cudworth had acted as a government informant, spying on the activities of would-be Catholic and royalist insurgents in the town and then filing reports to John Thurloe in London. Re-admitted to his previous post as sergeant at mace for the corporation in the summer of 1660, Cudworth had much ground to make up with his restored colleagues who, ironically, included Sir John Marlay. Marlay's son was one of those arrested as a result of Cudworth's spying, and Marlay, as mayor and JP, would later undertake the initial examinations of Jane Watson, who was suspected of bewitching Cudworth's children.⁵²

One of the most notable features of witchcraft trials after 1660 is the extent to which they tended to occur at times of severe religious persecution or political crisis. One such moment was the period immediately after the passage of the Second Conventicle Act in 1670, which sparked a renewed burst of magisterial activity against dissent. There was a noticeable spike in witchcraft trials in Devon at this time, though the scant nature of the surviving evidence does not allow any judgement to be made as to the likely role of religious partisanship in such trials.⁵³ More solid evidence, however, is forthcoming from a series of trials and accusations emanating from the town of Malmesbury in Wiltshire in 1670. Here, in a borough with a large dissenting presence, a major witch scare was initiated by the mayor

⁵⁰ Elmer, "Saints or Sorcerers", 151–2.

⁵¹ Anon., *An Anti-Brekekekex-Coax-Coax. Or a Throat-Hapsee for the Frogges and Toades that lately Crept abroad, croaking against the Common-Prayer-Book and Episcopacy* (London, 1660), 4. Among a range of mischiefs, the witches were said to have caused inexplicable ruptures in the body of the vicar Francis Bampfield (d. 1683), as well as securing the ejection of Bampfield's curate, Humphrey Philips (1632/3–1707), from his fellowship at Magdalen College, Oxford. Philips would later retire to Beckington in Somerset, the site of another witchcraft scare in 1690.

⁵² C. L. Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London, 1933), 400–1; TNA, ASSI 44/10; Thurloe, *State Papers*, vol. 3, 178–9, 186, 207, 336; J. Brand, *The History and Antiquities of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne*, 2 vols (London, 1789), ii, 490.

⁵³ Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 442–3. In addition to those trials noted here, there were several episodes of witchcraft in Devon about this time that did not come to trial, but which were the subject of much discussion in nonconformist circles. I discuss these further below, 205, 213–14.

William Griffin, following his committal of a local woman for bewitching a child of Robert Webb, who was, like Griffin, a prominent figure in corporation politics. Further accusations and arrests followed, leaving the town badly divided as to the likely guilt of the various suspects (as many as fourteen according to one account). Griffin himself was subjected to a great deal of vitriolic abuse. He accused one adversary of claiming that he had 'couzined the Towne', while another witness, the town clerk Roger Jarrett, deposed that one Thomas Rogers had called the mayor 'a Trayterly Toade and a Welsh Toade, and that if he lived to see him out of his office hee would spitt in his face, [and] further sayd that [Griffin] had set his hand to the death of the late King'.⁵⁴ It has not been possible to verify Rogers' accusation of treason, though the borough records clearly indicate that Griffin rose rapidly through the ranks of the town's administration in the 1650s. Unmolested by the Corporation Act commissioners, the borough's narrow oligarchy also survived the threat of Quo Warranto proceedings in 1668, leaving men like Griffin (also 'alderman' or mayor in 1662–63) and Webb (mayor in 1674–75) undisturbed in the execution of their offices.⁵⁵ It is likely that Griffin (d. 1672), on the evidence of his will, was a nonconformist sympathizer.⁵⁶ Webb's religious orientation is less clear, though like Griffin, he too first rose to prominence in borough affairs during the early 1650s.⁵⁷

In 1672, further charges were brought against two accomplices of the original suspect, Elizabeth Peacock, who had lingered in prison for over two years. Now, a full-scale witch hunt was in danger of taking off. From other sources, it would appear that as many as a dozen men and women had been implicated in acts of *maleficium*, and once again prominent figures within the corporation were seemingly promoting legal action against the suspects. Henry Denning (d. 1692), for example, who claimed to have suffered the loss of a large number of horses through witchcraft, was a leading figure in the government of the town. He had served as 'alderman' or mayor on two occasions (1661–62 and 1668–69), and like Griffin and Webb was almost certainly sympathetic to dissent. Under the Quo Warranto

⁵⁴ WSA, A1/110, Trinity 1670, 109; A1/110, Michaelmas 1670, 19, 143; TNA, ASSI 23/1 [Wiltshire, 1670]. It is worth reflecting on why Griffin opted not to mention such abuse. Embarrassed about his political past, prominent opponents in the borough like Jarrett would appear to have been only too eager to land him in hot water.

⁵⁵ Malmesbury Borough Archives, Court Minute Book, Accounts and Proceedings, 1600–1721, fos 123r, 131v, 135v, 136v, 137r, 138r–v, 146r; Henning, *House of Commons, 1660–1690*, i, 452. I would very much like to thank Elizabeth Snell, archivist at Malmesbury, for allowing me to consult the borough's records.

⁵⁶ In his very short but pious will, Griffin named his 'kynd and loving Friends' Thomas Evans and Richard Player as overseers (they also witnessed his will); TNA, PROB 11/339, fo. 148v [6 March 1671/2; proved 1 June 1672]. Evans (a fellow Welshman?) was the father of Thomas Evans, who acted as overseer and witnessed the will of the Presbyterian minister William Conway of neighbouring Westport in 1694. Conway had been preaching there since at least 1672: TNA, PROB 11/425, fos 31r–v [18 May 1694; proved 13 April 1695]; *Cal. Rev.*, 131.

⁵⁷ Robert Webb was made a commoner on 27 May 1651. On the same day, numerous other men (unusually) were made commoners, including Richard Player and Thomas Evans (above) and William Spenser, an Anabaptist. Webb may well then have been part of a circle of radical *arrivistes* who benefited from the inauguration of the Republic. The mayor at the time was Robert Arch, father of the Quaker of the same name: Malmesbury Borough Archives, Court Minute Book, fos 127v, 156v, 160v.

proceedings of 1684–85 that were specifically designed to purge Whigs and their nonconformist allies from local office, Denning was removed as a capital burgess for the town, only to be reinstated under the old charter in 1690.⁵⁸

On occasion, members of dissenting congregations found themselves formally accused of, and indicted for, witchcraft, as happened at Denby in Yorkshire in 1674. Prominent lay members of various local Presbyterian churches were quick to proffer support, many addressing a large petition to the local justices of the peace in which they vouched for the innocence of the accused, who, they implied, were the victims of ‘a most gross and groundless (if not malicious) Prosecution’. Reading between the lines, it seems probable that the chief accuser was herself a disaffected former member of the same church of whom ‘some of us could say too much concerning her, of a quite different nature: but that we judge Recrimination to be but an indirect way of Clearing the Innocent’. It may also be significant that the original accusations were made in 1672, at about the same time that tensions were rising in dissenting circles in response to the government’s offer of a new Declaration of Indulgence. Two of the signatories to the petition in favour of the accused witches were local men whose houses had been licensed for Presbyterian worship in that year.⁵⁹

More often than not, however, nonconformists were the source of allegations of witchcraft rather than the subject of complaint. A further spate of trials across England at the time of the Exclusion Crisis and its immediate aftermath—a period

⁵⁸ TNA, ASSI 24/22, fo. 185v; ASSI 23/1; Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 441, 442–3; Malmesbury Borough Archives, Court Minute Book, 1600–1721, fos 137r, 147r, 198r–v. Our knowledge of this episode is supplemented by the account of an unnamed local magistrate, writing about the trials many years later: *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 102 (1832), 405–10, 489–92. Cathy Gere has convincingly suggested Sir James Long (1617–1692) as the likely author, an attribution that would appear to find corroboration in the writings of Long’s friend, the antiquarian John Aubrey. Despite expressing strong reservations about much of the evidence against a number of the accused, Long, if the comments of the trial judge as reported by Francis North are to be believed, was not an out-and-out sceptic. His letter nonetheless pays testament to the deep divisions created in the town by the events of 1670–72: C. Gere, ‘William Harvey’s Weak Experiment: The Archaeology of an Anecdote’, *History Workshop Journal*, 51 (2001), 19–36; P. Millard (ed.), *Notes of Me: The Autobiography of Roger North* (Toronto, 2000), 193–4.

⁵⁹ TNA, ASSI 45/11/90–93; Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 405–6. At the head of the list of signatories was George Sedascue (1612–1688), otherwise known as Johannes Georgius Sadowski, the German-born son of a Polish lord, who followed his father-in-law and MP, Colonel Godfrey Bosville (1596–1658) of Gunthwaite, Yorkshire, into the service of the parliamentary armies. As a prominent figure in the New Model Army, he received various honours at the hands of Cromwell and was a prominent figure in Presbyterian circles after the Restoration. In December 1666, the ejected minister Oliver Heywood recorded dining with Major Sedascue at Gunthwaite: B. Denton, ‘George Sedascue, 1612–88’, *English Civil War Notes and Queries*, 1 (1984), 5–6; J. Horsfall Turner (ed.), *The Rev Oliver Heywood BA 1630–1712. His Autobiography*, 4 vols (Brighouse, 1882–85), i, 362. Other signatories included Silvanus Rich and William Cotton, whose respective houses at Penistone and Denby were licensed for Presbyterian worship in 1672. The former also offered shelter to the ejected minister Rowland Hancock after the passage of the Five Mile Act, while the Cottons employed another ejected clergyman, Christopher Richardson, to serve as family chaplain at Denby Grange. According to Heywood, the three accused of witchcraft were bound over to appear at the Lent assizes in 1675, but were never brought to the bar. Joseph Hinchcliffe hanged himself, and his wife died in bed shortly afterwards, praying for those who had falsely accused her: F. Bate, *The Declaration of Indulgence, 1672* (London, 1908), appendix 7, lv, lvi; *Cal. Rev.*, 246, 410; *Heywood Autobiography*, i, 362.

of intense religious and political discord—reaffirm the link between dissent and witchcraft. In 1679, Sheffield was the site of a witchcraft accusation in which the victim was a nonconformist.⁶⁰ A year later Cranbrook in Kent, the site of intense witch-hunting in the 1650s and home to hundreds of dissenters, witnessed a further trial in which one of the principal witnesses was a nonconformist gentleman, Samuel Bradshaw.⁶¹ In 1682, in the wake of the defeat of the Whigs and the beginnings of the Tory reaction, a witchcraft case at Ewell in Surrey provoked widespread interest and two short pamphlets.⁶² Once again, many of the chief witnesses who testified at the trial were prominent members of local dissenting congregations. Thomas Bourne (d. 1712), who proffered advice on discovering witches, and Nicholas Hawkins were both prosecuted in 1675 for attending a conventicle in Ewell.⁶³ Thomas Reynolds, who also testified against the suspected witch Joan Butts, was likewise tried and convicted the following year for failing, as constable, to inform the authorities of nonconformist meetings and for his unwillingness to prevent such assemblies from taking place. Reynolds, Bourne, and John Waterer (probably the husband of another witness, Joan Waterer) were prosecuted in 1678 for failing to attend their parish church, while Nicholas Hawkins was convicted of the same offence in the year of Butts' trial.⁶⁴ Ewell was in fact a major centre of dissent in rural Surrey, a county which, Southwark aside, did not have a particularly large nonconformist presence.⁶⁵ At least three former ministers, ejected at the Restoration, held meetings there, while a number of Ewell residents travelled to neighbouring towns such as Kingston-upon-Thames in search of spiritual edification. Thomas Bourne, for example, who figured prominently in the trial of

⁶⁰ WYAS, QS1/1812/6/4, 5; D. Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire: Sheffield and Its Neighbourhood, 1660–1740* (Leicester, London, and New York, 1991), 291–3. In the same year, the small Kent village of St Lawrence, Thanet, was the site of a witchcraft trial. The parish was a hotbed of religious discontent and division, much of it generated by the former minister Peter Johnson (1629–1704) and his brother 'who together . . . makes a violent party against the Incumbent, holds conventicles, and is implacable to the church'; Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, 260–1; *Cal. Rev.*, 300.

⁶¹ J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records. Kent Indictments 1676–1688* (London, 1997), 147; Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, 262. At the same assizes, Samuel Bradshaw, gent, of Cranbrook, along with many others, was indicted for 'recusancy' (i.e. nonconformity). Cockburn incorrectly suggests Samuel Bradstreet, but the name and identity of Bradshaw is confirmed by the fact that in July 1684 Samuel Bradshaw, gent, of Cranbrook (with many of those named in the 1681 indictment, including the Dover Quaker Luke Howard) was indicted for travelling more than five miles from his usual place of abode: Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records: Kent Indictments 1676–1688*, 146, 210.

⁶² Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, 262; Anon., *An Account of the Tryal and Examination of Joan Buts, for being a Common Witch and Inchantress, before . . . Sir Francis Pemberton, Lord Chief Justice at the Assizes, Holden for the Borough of Southwark and County of Surrey, on Monday, March 27 1682* (London, 1682); Anon., *Strange and Wonderful News from Yowel in Surry giving a True and Just Account of one Elizabeth Burgess, who was most strangely Bewitched and Tortured at a Sad Rate* (London, 1681).

⁶³ SHC, QR 2/5/Midsummer 1675, 36. At the trial, Butts described the witness, 'Hakeing' (presumably Nicholas Hawkins), reputedly a sober man, as one who had given himself to the Devil. When the judge enquired as to how she knew this, she could give no answer, and so was reprimanded for abusing the witness: Anon., *An Account . . . Joan Buts*, 2.

⁶⁴ SHC, QR 2/5/Easter 1676, 163–4, 216; Michaelmas 1678, 123, 130–1, 144–5; Michaelmas 1682, 114, 115.

⁶⁵ D. Wykes, 'Early Religious Dissent in Surrey after the Restoration', *Southern History*, 33 (2011), 54–77.

Butts, was prosecuted under the Conventicle Act in 1670 for attending a meeting at Kingston under the ministry of William Simmes (d. 1685).⁶⁶

In other witchcraft trials at this time, the influence of sympathetic magistrates, some of whom were almost certainly dissenters, was undoubtedly a crucial factor in promoting legal action in the courts. The prosecution of John Wright, a Bedford shoemaker, would appear to fit into this category.⁶⁷ The two presiding magistrates in this case—Thomas Christie (d. 1697) and William Bamforth—were leading figures in the emerging Whig camp in Bedford in the early years of the Exclusion Crisis. Christie, nominally a conforming Anglican, had feet in both camps. Staunchly anti-Catholic (he rescinded a number of bequests in his will to local clergymen should they reconvert to Catholicism), he had previously served the borough as clerk of the peace in the 1650s and had married the daughter of the old radical alderman John Eston.⁶⁸ Re-admitted to the burgessdom of the town in 1673, he was typical, according to Michael Mullett, of ‘the accommodation Bedford churchmen arrived at with a nonconformity that was sometimes too socially well placed for repression’. Christie’s colleague on the bench, William Bamforth, was one such example of high-status dissent. Like Christie, he was newly elected to the corporation in the 1670s and rose rapidly through the ranks, forming part of a determined clique of dissenters and moderate Anglican allies in the town’s affairs. An inveterate oath avoider, he was nonetheless chosen as mayor in September 1679 and immediately set about using his influence to admit friends and supporters to the burgessdom (including the radical plotter William, Lord Russell). In the ensuing conflict with loyal Tories on the corporation, and against the background of a national debate over exclusion, the two men were summoned to appear before the Privy Council in May 1680—that is, just weeks before the examination of John Wright for witchcraft.⁶⁹

If it was the case that so many witch trials after 1660 were either promoted or encouraged by dissenters, could the high acquittal rate (successful prosecutions were exceedingly rare) have been influenced by this factor? I shall say more about

⁶⁶ Kingston Museum and Heritage Service, Kingston, KB2/7/12/5. Simmes, who also held meetings at Ewell, was ejected as curate of Wimbledon in 1662: *Cal. Rev.*, 442. William Batho and William King, ejected at Ashted and Ewell respectively, also held conventicles in the village: *ibid.*, 36, 310.

⁶⁷ BLARS, HSA/1680 W68/94–97.

⁶⁸ TNA, PROB 11/439, fos 184r–187v [10 May 1697; proved 30 August 1697]; G. Parsloe (ed.), *The Minute Book of Bedford Corporation 1647–1664* (Luton, Bedfordshire Hist. Rec. Soc., vol. 26, 1949), 61–2, 89–90, 142.

⁶⁹ For a detailed account of the two men’s role in the factional politics of Bedford at this time, see especially M. Mullett, ‘“Deprived of Our Former Places”: The Internal Politics of Bedford, 1660 to 1688’, *Proceedings of the Bedfordshire Historical Society*, 59 (1980), 1–42. Both men were subsequently removed from the corporation following Quo Warranto proceedings in 1684. Bamforth briefly reappeared in 1687. Christie, on the other hand, sold out to the new regime and gradually drifted towards Toryism after the Glorious Revolution, all the while claiming that he had acted ‘civill and moderate’ towards both Catholics and dissenters, and had consistently argued for ‘the unreasonableness and unlawfulness of the exclusion for religion’: Henning, *House of Commons, 1660–1690*, ii, 66–7; *The Case of Thomas Christy of Bedford, Esquire* (1690); J. Collett-White, *How Bedfordshire Voted, 1685–1735: The Evidence of Local Poll Books*, vol. 1: 1685–1715 (Woodbridge, Bedfordshire Hist. Rec. Soc., vol. 85, 2006), 9, 10.

explanations for decline in Chapters 6 and 7, but it is worth pondering here the potential link between dissent and decline, both in terms of the total number of cases that came before the courts as well as the percentage of guilty verdicts that were handed down. It is exceedingly difficult to ascertain precisely how jurors and magistrates arrived at their decisions in such cases. However, we have a very interesting clue in the observation of one hostile gentleman and observer in the case of the bewitchment of the dissenting minister Thomas Spatchet (described above), who was alleged to have said that if 'she [the accused witch] Bewitched none but Spatchet and Manning [fellow Congregationalist preacher Samuel Manning], and *such as they are*, she should never be Hanged by him'.⁷⁰ If such views were prevalent among the majority of Restoration magistrates, then it might also explain another feature of witchcraft in this period, namely the growing trend in dissenting circles towards the use of informal and 'in-house' approaches to the treatment of co-religionists who claimed to have been bewitched. It is evident, for example, from the two cases in Devon collected by Richard Baxter and later published in his *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits* that dissenting ministers increasingly preferred to manage such cases without recourse to official legal channels. In neither case did formal court action ensue.⁷¹ We should hardly be surprised, perhaps, that after many years of persecution and legal exclusion from the various agencies of the state, many nonconformists grew increasingly wary of bringing formal charges against those they suspected of witchcraft, and instead sought other means of redress. Many of the more radical sects such as the Baptists, for whom separation from the state was a fact of life, created their own internal mechanisms for disciplining recalcitrant members, including those either suspected of witchcraft or of seeking the help of white witches.⁷² They were also not averse to publicizing cases of bewitchment and the success of their ministers in curing those so afflicted. In 1717, the Baptists of Hertfordshire published a long and detailed account of the means employed by a local minister, Thomas Aldridge (d. 1715), in the case of three girls from Sarratt, who were widely believed to be 'under an ill tongue' or bewitched and to have suffered fits for a prolonged period

⁷⁰ Petto, *Faithful Narrative*, 19 [my emphasis]. For Manning, see *Cal. Rev.*, 337. Various examinations of the suspected witch and other witnesses were taken by local magistrates, but despite making several confessions of guilt, including a pact with the Devil, no formal case was ever brought to court. The reaction of the 'sceptical' gentleman echoes the attitude of the Northamptonshire clergyman John Templer (c.1635–1678) to a case of suspected witchcraft at Great Bowden in neighbouring Leicestershire in 1673. Initially convinced that a group of children had suffered bewitchment, his change of mind was prompted by the fact that the father had sent the children for cure to a neighbouring Quaker. Templer subsequently sent a report (no longer extant) of the case to the Royal Society: Sir G. Isham (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Isham of Lamport (1658–81)* (Farnborough, 1971), 185–97.

⁷¹ Baxter, *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, 47–52, 65–9. I discuss these cases more fully below, 213–14.

⁷² For examples, see T. Dowley, 'Baptists and Discipline in the Seventeenth Century', *Baptist Quarterly*, 24 (1971), 162; H. G. Tibbutt (ed.), *Some Early Non-Conformist Church Books* (Amphill, Bedfordshire Hist. Rec. Soc., 51, 1972), 36–7; E. B. Underhill (ed.), *Records of the Churches of Christ, Gathered at Fenstanton, Warboys, and Hexham, 1644–1720* (London, 1854), 278; T. Dowley, 'The History of the English Baptists during the Great Persecution, 1660–1688', PhD thesis (Manchester, 1976), 147 and n.

in the early years of the eighteenth century. No witch was named, however, and the case did not come to court. The girls' recovery was largely accomplished by a combination of prayer and fasting undertaken by Aldridge and fellow neighbouring ministers, echoing the methods commonly used by earlier generations of puritan clergy.⁷³

WITCHCRAFT, MEDICINE, AND DISSENT

One of the more surprising aspects of the Sarratt case concerns the extent to which the Baptists were willing to call on the expertise of three physicians who, by and large, seem to have supported the ministers' diagnosis and distinctive form of cure. Two of those consulted in this case were men who by background were sympathetic to radical dissent, while all three were undoubtedly approached because of their status as experts in the field of diabolically induced disease. John Woodhouse (d. 1723), for example, was the son of the Baptist physician Christopher Woodhouse (c.1621–1682) of Berkhamsted, who seems to have inherited his father's practice and expertise in witchcraft cases.⁷⁴ According to the apothecary-cum-physician William Drage (d. 1668) of Hitchin, Christopher Woodhouse was 'famous in curing bewitched persons'; among others, he attended

⁷³ T. A[ldridge], *The Prevalency of Prayer, Set Forth in a Rustic, but Faithful Narrative of the Deplorable Case of the Children of John Baldwin of Sarret, in the County of Hertford: With the Manner of their Recovery. And a Brief Account of Some Other Remarkable Instances added in an Appendix* (London, 1717). Following Aldridge's death in 1715, Richard Carter, a Baptist minister from nearby Chipperfield, took over the care of the girls. Both Aldridge and Carter signed the preface to Samuel Ewer's *An Answer to Mr Edward Hitchen's Book, Intituled, The Infants Cause Pleaded, Clear'd and Vindicated* (London, 1710). Ewer (d. 1708) was Baptist minister at Hemel Hempstead. Other members of his congregation included Thomas Marsom, whose sons Nathan and Samuel signed a testimonial to another of the cases described in Aldridge's book, that of Thomas Burridge, of Market-Street, Bedfordshire, who was similarly afflicted in 1712. Thomas Marsom was an early friend of John Bunyan who is reputed to have encouraged him to publish *Pilgrim's Progress*.

⁷⁴ [Aldridge], *Prevalency of Prayer*, 3–4, 8, 15. Unusually for one of his religious background, John was highly educated (he possessed a Cambridge MD) and also served as a magistrate on the county bench from 1693 onwards: Venn, iv, 459; W. Le Hardy (ed.), *Hertfordshire County Records. Calendar to the Sessions Books and Sessions Minute Books... 1658 to 1700* (Hertford, 1930), 525. His father Christopher had served in the parliamentary armies in south Wales in the civil war. In 1662 he was serving as interim mayor of Berkhamsted shortly before the corporation was dissolved under Quo Warranto procedures the following year (the only corporation to lose its privileges in this way between 1660 and 1683). Woodhouse's brother-in-law Stephen Ewer allowed his house at Hatfield to be licensed for congregational worship in 1672, while Christopher's radical connections are further suggested by the marriage of his daughter Elizabeth to the Cambridgeshire Quaker John Harvey Jr in 1683. He, however, probably remained a Baptist; the will of his widow was witnessed by, among others, Thomas Aldridge—almost certainly the minister at the centre of the Sarratt case (above); WSA, 1461/725; J. W. Cobb, *Two Lectures on the History and Antiquities of Berkhamsted* (London, 1883), 44, 70, 96; P. D. Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic: Partisan Politics in England's Towns 1650–1730* (Cambridge, 1998), 165; W. Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts. Being Lectures upon the Nonconformist Worthies of St Albans, and Memorials of Puritanism and Nonconformity in... the County of Hertford* (London, 1884), 585; B. S. Snell (ed.), *The Minute Book of the Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends for the Upperside of Buckinghamshire, 1669–1690* (Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire Rec. Soc., 1, 1937), 119, 120; TNA, PROB 11/522, fos 97r–v [will of Rebecca Woodhouse, widow, 2 December 1692; proved 7 July 1711].

upon the possessed maid Mary Hall of Little Gaddesden in 1664.⁷⁵ Gustavus Parker (d.1722), too, would appear to have specialized in the care and cure of the bewitched. He diagnosed that Rebecca Baldwin was 'under an ill Tongue' and twice placed her under his close supervision at his home in nearby St Albans.⁷⁶ The third member of this medical triumvirate, William Boreman or Burman (d.1707), is, however, by far the most intriguing for the light which his career sheds on the relationship between witchcraft, medicine, and dissent in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Boreman, who confirmed the diagnosis of the other two doctors, was perhaps one of the most consulted physicians of his age for those who feared they were suffering at the hands of malevolent witches. Over a career lasting almost forty years, Boreman, if Daniel Defoe is to be believed, 'would not suffer any such thing as a Witch to live . . . but exposed and detected them on all occasions'.⁷⁷ He first came to public attention in 1679 when he attempted to exorcize a young maid at Orpington in Kent, and later appeared as an expert witness in two trials at the Kent assizes in 1681 and 1690.⁷⁸ According to the nonconformist minister and physician Henry Sampson (c.1629–1700), he was a frequent visitor to London, where he had a chamber in Walbrook and grew rich from his practice there. Perhaps the best evidence for the extent of his trade and the deep-seated faith in his ability to heal those bewitched is provided by the lengthy account to be found in a case in the Court of Arches in 1683–84 brought by the husband of one of his patients, who

⁷⁵ W. Drage, *Daimonomageia* (London, 1665), 32. Drage's demonology was intended as a guide for physicians confronted by cases of diabolical possession and witchcraft. It focused primarily on the search for physical cures and freely acknowledged the problem of fraud. Drage remained adamant, however, that witchcraft and possession was a reality and that he had personally witnessed examples of the same, including the case of Mary Hall, the daughter of pious nonconformists who was possessed by two spirits. Drage was summoned after various Baptist preachers and the specialist Dr Woodhouse had failed to effect the cure. Drage's own religious affiliation is unknown, though his wife Elizabeth probably converted to Quakerism in about 1664. His medical works, moreover, were printed by the radical publishers Simon and Joan Dover of London: see *ODNB*, sub Drage, William; Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts*, 638; *CSPD*, 1663–1664, 366.

⁷⁶ [Aldridge], *Prevalency of Prayer*, 2–3, 8, 15. Nonconformist connections in the case of Parker are suggested by the fact that his unwitnessed will of 1720 was authenticated by Joshua Pembroke (d. 1739 or 1740), the son of William Pembroke, one of the leading figures in the dissenting movement in St Albans in the late seventeenth century: TNA, PROB 11/587, fos 84r–v [1 April 1720; proved 6 September 1722]; J. T. Smith and M. A. North, *St Albans, 1600–1750: A ThorOUGHfare Town and Its People* (Hatfield, 2003), 173–4.

⁷⁷ [Aldridge], *Prevalency of Prayer*, 8; D. Defoe, *A System of Magick* (1727), ed. P. Elmer (London, 2005), 230. Defoe's encounter with Boreman, which occupies a large section of the book (210–32), is discussed more fully in *ibid.*, 13–16. I hope to say more at length about Boreman and his links to the radical underground, including Behmenist groups such as the early Philadelphians, in future publications.

⁷⁸ Anon., *Strange News from Arpington near Bexly in Kent* (London, 1679); Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, 261, 263; Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records: Kent Indictments 1676–1688*, 156–7. Orpington, near Boreman's earlier residence at Bexley, was a local centre of Baptist activity; see above, 149n. Dr Borman, of Bexley, Kent, paid for eight hearths in the tax returns of 1664, and stood excommunicated (case unknown) in 1667. He was later resident at Wilmington, near Dartford: D. Harrington (ed.), *Kent Hearth Tax Assessment Lady Day 1664* (London, British Rec. Soc., Hearth Tax Series, 2, and Kent Arch. Soc., Kent Records, 29, 2000), 91; LPL, VH 85/46 [11 July 1667].

accused Boreman of adultery and sexual impropriety. Various witnesses testified to the fact that the doctor's house at Wilmington in Kent was frequently used as a refuge and place of cure for those who were alleged to suffer from bewitchment and possession. They also hint darkly at the slightly unorthodox measures adopted by Boreman in assisting those tormented by witches. Medicines were dispensed, but only after the doctor had first breathed on them. On the whole, however, Boreman's preferred method was to resort, as in the case of Rebecca Baldwin of Sarratt, to fasting and prayer and 'by laying the hand of a Believer upon the parte aggrieved'.⁷⁹

The laying-on of hands, of course, had been widely used by the early Baptists, further evidence perhaps of Boreman's nonconformist roots and connections. When one of his patients gave birth at his house—giving rise to speculation and gossip that Boreman was the father—it was alleged that the doctor had initially refused to have the child baptized because the ceremony 'signified noe thinge'. Eventually he relented and performed the service himself, praying in idiosyncratic fashion that 'the old Adam in the child might be crucified and abolished in him [while] laying his hands att the time on the child'.⁸⁰ That Boreman was radically inclined, both religiously and politically, is beyond dispute. He was frequently in trouble for expressing extreme opinions, some of which drew on his obsession with witchcraft and demonic possession. In August 1678, for example, he was alleged to have said at Sandwich in Kent that 'I am for no king in England nor for any head of the Church but Jesus Christ', adding for good measure that he had formerly been acquainted with the Leveller leader John Lilburne 'and was privy to all his affairs and undertakings'. Six years later, in the aftermath of the Exclusion Crisis, he was prosecuted at the Maidstone assizes for allegedly claiming that the duke of York was 'a great wizard . . . and that he rides about att night in fiery chariots to torment soules, and [is] preparing for a field of blood [with] his witchcraft [and that he] will lay the nation in blood and Popish slavery'. Found guilty and fined, Boreman was treading on thin ice, especially as he also advised the duke of Monmouth 'to make an interest in every county . . . of the cheife in . . . England to be his friends'. It is just possible that Boreman matched words with deeds, and placed his own expertise in the occult sciences and magic at the disposal of his Whig friends. In November 1685, a government agent in Amsterdam reported that two of the duke of Monmouth's sisters had recently arrived in the city, bragging that 'they have a Magicall Sword which in the Pomel contains such a Potent Talismanick Spell, that when it is once drawn [the duke's] Enemies must have fled before the Bearer'. On being asked the source of this wonderful secret, the two women, who 'both pretended to magicall Sciences, and something to ye Philosophicall Stone', claimed to have

⁷⁹ BL, Add. MS 4460, fos 47v–48r; LPL, Court of Arches (Attree v. Burman), D324b; B10/217.

⁸⁰ LPL, D324b, fos 113r–114r. Boreman was formally indicted at the Lent assizes in 1684 for 'unlawfully baptizing the son of William and Joan Atree . . . being a person not in holy orders'. He was found not guilty by the grand jury: Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records: Kent Indictments 1676–1688*, 195.

consulted Dr Boreman, 'in or about London', who 'is acquainted with this Chimericall Knack'.⁸¹

It would be easy to dismiss Boreman and his medical colleagues who attended on the bewitched maid at Sarratt, as some of their contemporaries were inclined to do, as little more than overly credulous 'enthusiasts' in whom the faculty of superstition outweighed that of reason. Indeed, Boreman's attachment to the ideas of Jacob Boehme and role in promoting the mystical views of John Pordage and the early Philadelphians would, superficially at least, appear to strengthen the case for the prosecution. This would be a grave mistake, however, as it implies that men like Boreman, Drage, Parker, and Woodhouse were out of touch with the latest developments in medicine and natural philosophy. This was not so. Boreman, for example, was a signatory to the petition of the Society of Chemical Physicians, which sought to overthrow the medical monopoly exercised by the Galenic College of Physicians in London in 1665.⁸² The widely read Drage consistently championed the cause of the moderns over 'the Sons of Superstition and Tradition'.⁸³ Most intriguing of all are the intellectual interests of Gustavus Parker, who seems to have effortlessly combined a deep-seated commitment to magic with an equally impressive attachment to scientific and technological innovation in the field of meteorology. At the same time as he was teaching students magic and experiencing visions and revelations, Parker was also engaged in the collection of weather data derived from a portable barometer that he had invented. Publishing the results of his observations and experiments, he cited extensively from the works of Robert Boyle as well as those of Mersenne and Robert Hooke.⁸⁴

⁸¹ CSPD, 1678, 394, 396, 401; TNA, SP 29/406/122; Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records: Kent Indictments 1676–1688*, 190; CSPD, 1684–1685, 268; BL, Add. MS 41,812, fos 236r–v. One of the chief witnesses against Boreman in 1684 (both at the assizes and in the Court of Arches) was his former servant, Henry Pope. To make matters worse Pope, according to the doctor, had possession of his papers and an incriminating notebook, which he was eager to retrieve. Among those who sought to have it returned was Boreman's friend John Pordage (for whom, see below, 272–3) who questioned Pope as to its whereabouts. Pope's own motives in witnessing against his former employer are not hard to fathom. Boreman and his associates were insinuating that Pope was the father of the bewitched woman's child, a claim that Pope vigorously denied with the counter-suggestion that Boreman had sought to bribe him to admit fatherhood: LPL, D324b, fos 36r, 139v–140r, 160v, 253v–256r, 258r–v.

⁸² T. O'Dowde, *The Poor Man's Physician* (London, 1665), unpaginated appendix. Boreman's medical qualifications are unclear. He claimed to possess an archiepiscopal licence awarded in 1661, but no evidence of such a grant survives; LPL, D324b, fos 29v, 43v–44r. Woodhouse may have shared Boreman's interest in chemical medicine. In 1657 Robert Turner, a key figure in the scheme to create a Society of Chemical Physicians in 1665, dedicated one of his many medical translations to his friend Christopher Woodhouse, doctor of physic, of Berkhamsted: J. Sadler, *Enchiridion Medicum: An Enchiridion of the Art of Physick*, trans. R. Turner (London, 1657).

⁸³ W. Drage, *A Physical Nosonomy, or, A New and True Description of the Law of God (called Nature) in the Body of Man* (London, 1664). In this work, which advocated a system of reformed astrological medicine, Drage announced that he was 'much troubled to see how superstitiously Physicians have been led by the Tradition of Galen, Hippocrates, Etius, Aegineta, and Others': *ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁴ G. Parker, *An Account of a Portable Barometer, with Reasons and Rules for the Use of It* (London, 1699); BL, Lansdowne MS 846 ['The Wonderful Visions and Revelations of Vagust Re-prake'], fos 182r–184v; *Antiquarian Repertory* (London, 1808), ii, 316–19. Parker's meteorological researches were, in part, an attempt to supersede the predictions of astrologers like John Gadbury with whom he engaged in dispute in the early years of the eighteenth century: see J. Golinski, 'Barometers of Change:

The case of Parker reminds us again of just how difficult it is to speak of separate and distinct approaches to science in this period in which rational, modern methodologies prevailed over the 'superstitious' remnants of occultism. As the examples cited above suggest, it would also be a mistake to infer that those doctors and natural philosophers who continued to promote the reality of witchcraft did so in defiance of the recent advances in scientific method and practice. Historians of science have long been aware of the role played by prominent scientific figures such as Robert Boyle, and others sympathetic to the new science such as Joseph Glanvill, in seeking solid, empirical evidence for the existence of witches and spirits. Less frequently commented upon is the role that was played by physicians in this process, especially those drawn from the ranks of dissenting circles. Many, moreover, combined medical practice with pastoral responsibilities, acting as true 'spiritual physicians' to their congregations. Typical were men like Richard Gilpin (for whom, see above, pp. 185–6), Nathaniel Fairfax, and John Reynolds, who all pursued medical careers after losing their livings in 1662. Gilpin, like many of his ministerial colleagues among the dissenters, was no medical obscurantist. Alongside citations of classical demonological texts by authors such as Sprenger, Bodin, del Río, and Weyer, he demonstrated a commendable knowledge of the 'moderns', including the chemistry of van Helmont, Thomas Willis, and the Dutch pioneer Francis Sylvius (1614–1672), whose work he would undoubtedly have encountered during his brief stay at Leiden prior to receiving his MD in 1676.⁸⁵ Gilpin's demonological thinking was also informed by a strong belief in the Devil as a supreme naturalist, whose knowledge far exceeded that of humankind. Skilled in the knowledge of human physiology, Gilpin's Satan was able to manipulate the body's humours and passions and lead men and women into temptation, ill health, and religious 'enthusiasm', a pathological condition that was to obsess religious commentators in the period after 1660. At the same time, he nonetheless hinted at man's potential to both understand and challenge the Devil's supremacy, citing the invention of scientific aids such as the telescope, which enabled astronomers, like Satan, to 'discover things at vast distances'.⁸⁶

Meteorological Instruments as Machines of Enlightenment', in W. Clark, J. Golinski, and S. Schaffer (eds), *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe* (Chicago, 1999), 83–4.

⁸⁵ Gilpin, *Daemonologia Sacra*, *passim*. Gilpin also cited Robert Boyle's *Occasional Reflections upon Several Subjects* (1665); Gilpin, *Daemonologia Sacra*, iii, 113.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, iii, 144. Gilpin cited this example in order to refute Hobbes' contention that the temptation of Christ on the mount was a vision and had no basis in physical reality. Gilpin's ministry combined medicine and theology in a number of fascinating ways. In 1668, for example, he was preaching to large congregations in the Barber Surgeons' Hall in Newcastle, much to the irritation of the bishop of Durham and town authorities (the Surgeons' Hall lay outside the jurisdiction of the corporation): *CSPD, 1668–1669*, 73; H. Bourne, *The History of Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle, 1736), 137–8, 240–1. He also acted as a mentor to other dissenting priest-physicians, including Timothy Manlove (1663–1699), who followed Gilpin in attacking the materialism of Hobbes: *ODNB*, sub Manlove, Timothy; T. Manlove, *The Immortality of the Soul Asserted and Practically Improved* (London, 1697), 5. For Gilpin's special interest in melancholy, a common affliction among Restoration nonconformists (and discussed more fully below, 207–9), see Gilpin, *Daemonologia Sacra*, 35, 40, 182, 226–7, 299–300, 307, 345–6, 382–3.

Nathaniel Fairfax (1637–1690), part of a well-connected family of puritan and later nonconformist ministers in Suffolk, was another to benefit from a modern medical education at the University of Leiden, where he proceeded MD in 1665. His thesis, dedicated to Sylvius, suggests an early interest in medical and scientific innovation, which he continued to foster in a lengthy correspondence with Henry Oldenburg, secretary to the Royal Society, after 1667. Typically, Fairfax's interests were wide ranging and eclectic, but all were linked by a common fascination with what one might best term the preternatural, including extraordinary feats of eating, rare celestial and meteorological phenomena, anatomical anomalies, monstrous births, and of course witchcraft. Some of Fairfax's contributions later appeared in the *Philosophical Transactions*, and he again heaped lavish praise on the Royal Society in 1674 in a philosophical work concerned with corporeality in which, citing the case of the demon of Mascon, he reiterated his belief in the reality of demons and spirits.⁸⁷

John Reynolds (1632–1683), like Gilpin and Fairfax, was part of that diaspora which saw so many of the ejected of 1660–62 travelling to Holland in search of a medical degree, though in Reynolds case this was almost certainly prompted by a politically motivated clampdown on illicit practice in the diocese of Worcester in 1682.⁸⁸ Reynolds had in fact been practising medicine alongside his other spiritual duties for many years, and like Fairfax was attracted to rare and extreme cases where the boundary between nature and miracle was most open to debate. It was undoubtedly a fascination with such borderline instances that led Reynolds to undertake a full investigation of the celebrated case of the abstinent Martha Taylor (above, p. 184), the results of which appeared in a book 'humbly offered' to the Royal Society in 1669. Reynolds' conclusions, based on extensive reading of the works of contemporary anatomical pioneers such as Walter Needham and Thomas Willis as well as a keen interest in the latest theories surrounding fermentation and the work of 'that noble Philosopher' Robert Boyle, came down firmly on the side that the maid's fasting was both natural and providential, occupying a middle position between those 'half-witted Atheists' who reject all notion of spirit and others who 'make all miracles'.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ ODNB, sub Fairfax, Nathaniel; A. R. and M. B. Hall (eds), *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, 13 vols (Madison, WI, Milwaukee, WI, London, and Philadelphia, PA, 1965–86), iii, 315–20, 321 and n., 358–60, 386–9, 400–4, 419–24, 491–7, 622–6; iv, 11–17, 123–6, 180–5, 259–62, 335–8, 433–5, 554–5; v, 47–9, 284–6, 376–9, 504–6; vi, 67–70; *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. 1 (1665), 391–2; vol. 2 [1667], 546–51; vol. 3 (1668), 803–4; N. Fairfax, *A Treatise of the Bulk and Selvedge of the World* (London, 1674), unpaginated epistle dedicatory and 141.

⁸⁸ ODNB, sub Reynolds, John; *Cal. Rev.*, 409; R. W. Innes Smith, *English-Speaking Students of Medicine at the University of Leyden* (Edinburgh, 1932), 193; WRO, 795.02/BA 2302/33/7390.

⁸⁹ J. Reynolds, *A Discourse upon Prodigious Abstinence: Occasioned by the Twelve Months Fasting of Martha Taylor, the Famed Derbyshire Damosel* (London, 1669), A3r and *passim*. Reynolds' collaborator in chief, Walter Needham (1632–1691), who produced groundbreaking research on the structure of the foetus, may have harboured nonconformist sympathies as well as sharing Reynolds' belief in providence and the preternatural. Needham's wife Elizabeth was the daughter of the radical MP and regicide Cornelius Holland. Like her husband, a friend of the latitudinarian divine Edward Fowler (he and Fowler witnessed the will of the radical physician Nathan Paget in 1679), she provided corroboratory evidence for Joseph Glanvill's book on demonology. Walter, meanwhile, was the

Interest in preternatural events such as the Martha Taylor case reverberated, as we have seen, in nonconformist circles and may have prompted another priest-physician, Richard Morton (1637–1698), to initiate his own pioneering research into anorexia nervosa. Morton, who received an honorary MD from Oxford (incorporated at Cambridge in 1680) and was made a fellow of the College of Physicians in 1679, would later attest to the cure of the severely disabled nonconformist Elizabeth Savage in 1694—a case that many were eager to promote as evidence for the continuing viability of miracles.⁹⁰ A year later, Charles Nichols (d. 1717 or 1718), the son of an ejected minister and licentiate of the College, signed a similar affidavit on behalf of a former patient, Susanna Arch, who, he claimed, was recovered from an incurable skin disease ‘by the immediate hand of God, as the Fruit and Effect of her Faith’. Like Elizabeth Savage, she too was a member of a congregation of London dissenters.⁹¹ The early 1690s witnessed a spate of miracle pamphlets, which, more often than not, contained the imprimatur of eminent physicians drawn from nonconformist backgrounds. One of the first was almost certainly the work of the royal physician James Welwood (1652–1727), the son of an ardent Scottish Presbyterian who later settled in London, became a fellow of the College of Physicians, and was rewarded for his political pamphleteering on behalf of the Williamite revolution with a series of government posts. In 1693, Welwood penned a highly sympathetic account of the cure of a young Huguenot maid, Marie Maillard, in which he attempted to steer a middle course between the atheist and the zealot in ascribing the girl’s recovery to the category of the preternatural. Characteristically, Welwood argued that it was impossible to define with any certainty the limits of nature, or what he termed ‘the Compass of Second Causes’. While arguing that natural philosophers and others should be ‘slow in believing and severe in enquiring after unusual things’, he nonetheless left the door open for those who favoured an active, providential deity, who in this instance acted to confound atheists and provide succour to the victims of Catholic persecution.⁹² As these

source of a rhyme prognosticating preternatural occurrences in 1666: TNA, PROB 11/359, fos 67r–68r [will of Nathan Pagett, 7 January 1678/9; proved 15 January 1678/9]; J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus: Or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions* (London, 1681), ii, 241; A. Clark (ed.), *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood*, 5 vols (Oxford, Oxford Hist. Soc., 1891–1900), ii (1664–81), 53–5. For Needham’s medical career, see *ODNB* (which omits any reference to his marriage).

⁹⁰ *ODNB*, sub Morton, Richard; Munk, i, 398; J. A. Silverman, ‘Richard Morton, 1637–1698 Limner of Anorexia Nervosa: His Life and Times’, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 250 (1983), 2830–2; Anon., *A Narrative of the Late Extraordinary Cure Wrought in an Instant upon Mrs Eliz. Savage . . . Without the Use of Any Natural Means . . . With an Appendix, Attempting to Prove, That Miracles are not Ceas’d* (London, 1694), 24.

⁹¹ *Cal. Rev.*, 365–6; Munk, i, 476; Anon., *A Relation of the Miraculous Cure of Susannah Arch, of a Leprosy and Physick* (London, 1695), 13–19. Jane Shaw mistakenly refers to Nichols as an apothecary: Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England*, 132–3. In his will, Nichols left £30 to dissenting ministers and their widows: TNA, PROB 11/562, fos 320r–321r [29 May 1717; proved 27 February 1717/18].

⁹² Anon., *A True Relation of the Wonderful Cure of Mary Maillard . . . To Which is Added, A Letter from Dr. Welwood to . . . the Lady Mayoress* (London, 1694), 22–4. The work was addressed to Lady Ashurst, the wife of Sir William Ashurst (1647–1720), Whig lord mayor of London and nonconformist sympathizer. Welwood’s authorship or promotion of the pamphlet is strongly suggested by the fact that he had previously collaborated closely with the publisher, Richard

examples suggest, moderate nonconformists were not averse to promoting the idea that God might on occasion suspend the laws of nature and perform miracles. More often than not, however, they preferred to focus discussion on phenomena such as witchcraft that fell into the category of the preternatural, appealing in the process to bodies such as the Royal Society and its most esteemed members, such as Robert Boyle, to adjudicate and validate such claims.

It should therefore come as no great surprise to learn that on the one occasion that an attempt was made to publicly discuss witchcraft at the Royal Society, the member responsible, Clopton Havers (d. 1692), was a physician with strong links to nonconformity. Havers, author of one of the first treatises to discuss the microscopic analysis of the bones, was the son of an ejected minister, Henry Havers, to whom, along with Richard Morton (above), he dedicated his Utrecht MD thesis in 1685. On 28 March 1688, Havers proposed discussion of a communication which he had recently received from Ireland concerning 'a maid there greatly tormented with a pain in her side [and] frequent faintings and other odd Symptomes which made it supposed she was Bewitcht'. Havers' correspondent observed that the maid recovered when a suspected witch was accused of the crime. A majority of members present, however, rapidly rejected the case, putting it down in all likelihood to a 'confederacy, as several things of the Like nature had upon Examination been found to be'.⁹³ While many members of the Royal Society were seemingly reticent or unwilling to discuss topics like witchcraft, informal communication on such issues, as we have seen in the case of Fairfax and Oldenburg, did take place. Not surprisingly, given his interest in the subject, Robert Boyle, more often than not, was the principal recipient of such correspondence.

Boyle, as is well known, was sympathetic to the plight of moderate dissenters and shared their concern with providential occurrences, including witchcraft. He was much admired, for example, by Richard Baxter and shared the latter's interest in collecting verifiable and reliable instances of witchcraft as part of a wider project designed to discredit the growing trend toward atheism and Sadducism.⁹⁴ We should not be too surprised to learn then that Boyle was frequently the recipient of letters from correspondents with nonconformist backgrounds that contained fresh evidence of diabolism and witchcraft. In 1663, for example, Samuel Collins

Baldwin, on a series of government initiatives: see *ODNB*, sub Welwood, James; E. L. Furdell, *James Welwood: Physician to the Glorious Revolution* (Conshohocken, PA, 1998).

⁹³ *ODNB*, sub Havers, Clopton; *Cal. Rev.*, 252; Munk, i, 477; Innes Smith, *English-Speaking Students . . . Leyden*, 110; C. Havers, *Osteologia Nova, or Some New Observations of the Bones* (London, 1691); M. Hunter, 'Magic, Science and Reputation: Robert Boyle, the Royal Society and the Occult in the Late Seventeenth Century', in M. Hunter, *Robert Boyle (1627–1691): Scrupulosity and Science* (Woodbridge, 2000), 243 [citing Royal Society Library, RB/117: Copy Journal Book 7, 100–1]. Havers paid a further debt of thanks to his former tutor Richard Morton in the preface to his *Osteologia Nova*.

⁹⁴ For Boyle and witchcraft, see especially M. Hunter, 'Alchemy, Magic and Moralism in the Thought of Robert Boyle', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 23 (1990), 387–410. For the providentialism of the Boyle family, see Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist*, 132–6. I concur with Richard Baxter's biographer, William Lamont, who suggests that Boyle would have been 'proud to have written' Baxter's *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*: W. Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy* (London, 1996), 173.

(1619–1670), the son of an eminent puritan minister, in his capacity as physician to the Tsar, regaled Boyle with numerous tales of Russian witchcraft.⁹⁵ Likewise, Samuel Colepresse (d. 1669?), a protégé of Sir William Strode (1614–1676), was encouraged by Boyle to forward stories of witchcraft, monstrous births, and other medical oddities from his native Devon to the Royal Society in 1667. A year later, with Boyle's support, Colepresse travelled to Leiden to study medicine and 'particularly to be acquainted with ye Cartesian way in Chymistry'. He probably died there in 1669, but not before presenting Boyle with a copy of a Leiden thesis on optics in the same year.⁹⁶ Particularly intriguing, given Boyle's links with Richard Baxter, is a letter that he received from an Exeter surgeon, Anthony Smith (d. 1699), in 1668. The subject of the letter was not witchcraft, but concerned instead a patient from Woodbury in Devon whom he was treating for breast cancer. Smith announced himself as a great admirer of the works of Boyle and requested one of his medicines, which he had previously used with much success. A few years later, Smith, a prominent figure in dissenting circles, provided Baxter with a detailed description of a case of witchcraft at Honiton in Devon in which he had performed an operation on a bewitched girl in order to remove a pin (discussed further below, pp. 213–14). Given the three men's shared interest in witchcraft, it is tempting to speculate that Boyle acted as a middleman in this instance.⁹⁷ Admirers of Boyle's corpuscularianism frequently shared the great natural

⁹⁵ *The Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, ed. M. Hunter, A. Clericuzio, and L. M. Principe, 6 vols (London, 2001), ii, 92–4, 104–8. Collins had first spoken to Boyle on the subject of witchcraft at the house of the latter's sister, at Leigh in Essex. Mary Rich (1624–1678), countess of Warwick, had acted as patron to Collins' father, also Samuel, vicar of nearby Braintree. Initially 'very incredulous', Collins' experience in Russia had now satisfied him and he promised to find further evidences of such matters for Boyle as 'to make any reasonable man believe there are such kind of realities in the world as they talke of about spirits'. He nonetheless found the Russians overly credulous at times, ascribing 'all unusual accidents to fascination', and was also perturbed at their treatment of women suspects who 'they torment . . . worse then Hopkins the witch-finder in Essex'. For Collins, see *ODNB*, which errs in dating his father's death to 1667. Samuel Collins Snr died in 1657 and was buried at Braintree. In his own will of 1670, Collins Jnr refers to his father's grave as having been desecrated by 'some inhumane and malignant persons', presumably a reference to anti-puritan elements in the town: TNA, PROB 11/334, fos 249r–v [27 April 1670; proved 29 November 1670].

⁹⁶ Oldenburg, *Correspondence*, iii, 308–10, 393–4, 542–3; iv, 105–7, 151–2, 197–8, 294–8, 572–5; BL, 537. f. 27 (23). Sir William Strode was the son of Sir Richard Strode (d. 1669), 'a Metallical and Chymicall Scholar' and tin mine owner, who lived at Chalmington, Dorset, just ten miles from Boyle's family home at Stalbridge. Sir Richard would appear to have converted from mainstream puritanism to the Baptists by the time of his death. Both Sir William and his son Robert (1638–1707) supplied Robert Boyle with accounts of mines and fowling. The Boyle–Strode connection may explain the visit of one Mr Colepresse to the earl of Cork in Ireland in 1658: SUL, HP 29/8/9B; TNA, PROB 11/333, fos 222v–223v [20 July 1669; proved 27 July 1670]; Royal Society Library, RB/1/21 [Boyle, work diary], fos 349–51, 415; 23, fos 38–40, 45; Chatsworth House, Lismore MS 29, sub 3 November 1658.

⁹⁷ Boyle, *Correspondence*, iv, 37–9; Baxter, *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, 65–9. Smith appears frequently in the records of the city of Exeter, where he was employed as the city's surgeon. In 1672, his house was licensed for Presbyterian worship. He had moved, however, to Kingston-upon-Thames in Surrey by 1681, when he corresponded with Baxter. He was subsequently prosecuted at the Surrey quarter sessions for failing to attend his parish church. His long and pious will attests to his extensive links with London Dissent and includes bequests to a number of Presbyterian ministers in and around the capital: DRO, ECA C/1/65, fo. 39v; QS 1/10, Baptist, 1663, Easter 1667; ECA 10, fos 148v, 154v, 163v, 164v, 170r; Bate, *Declaration of Indulgence, 1672*, appendix 7, lxiv; SHC, QR 2/5,

philosopher's interest in the preternatural. One of the last major works to uphold belief in witchcraft was written by a physician, Richard Boulton (d. c.1724), who had earlier produced a four-volume epitome of the works of Boyle.⁹⁸

SPIRITUAL PHYSIC, WITCHCRAFT, AND DISSENT

Why were nonconformists so prone to belief in witchcraft and so prominent in the dwindling number of trials held after 1660? And why did medical practitioners active in dissenting circles so actively encourage such beliefs as well as promote diagnoses of bewitchment in their everyday practice? In all probability, no single explanation is likely to account for this phenomenon. As a number of the examples cited above suggest, many dissenters were as eager as some of their Anglican colleagues to authenticate examples of preternatural fasting, witchcraft, and the existence of spirits as part of a wider struggle in the campaign against atheism and unbelief. As we shall see, this was to prove a highly successful strategy in forging close links between moderates on both sides of the religious divide. A key aim of both groups was to seek common ground upon which to build a new religious consensus, one that would allow moderate dissenters to rejoin the Anglican fold, and in the process redraw the boundaries of the confessional state. While historians continue to debate the meaning and significance of latitudinarian sympathies within the established Church, less thought has been given to the expression of similar sentiments from important figures inside the dissenting movement. To some extent, this reflects the dominance of a historiography, rooted in nonconformity, which has tended to accept separation as the inevitable product of a persecutory Church and state. The reification of Dissent, however, as historians of this period are beginning to discover, provides a somewhat skewed and misleading reading of what actually took place in Britain after the Restoration. For much of the period after 1660, persecution was both intermittent and highly localized. It was also punctuated by periods of relative calm in which dissenters lived peaceably alongside their conformist neighbours, and in many cases sought re-admission to

Midsummer 1683, 167; 2/5/Michaelmas 1684, 173; TNA, PROB 11/451, fos 280v–284v [10 February 1698/9; proved 11 July 1699].

⁹⁸ R. Boulton, *Compleat History of Magick, Sorcery, and Witchcraft*, 2 vols (London, 1715–16); R. Boulton, *The Possibility and Reality of Magick, Sorcery, and Witchcraft, Demonstrated. Or, A Vindication of a Compleat History... in Answer to Dr Hutchinson's Historical Essay* (London, 1722); R. Boulton, *The Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle, Esq., Epitomiz'd by Richard Boulton*, 4 vols (London, 1699–1700). Boulton was a prolific author of medical and surgical works, the earliest of which suggest a strong inclination towards mechanism. Initially employed by the eminent London physician and nonconformist Charles Goodall (c.1642–1712) to write in defence of the College of Physicians, he subsequently fell out with his patron, who stigmatized him as a quack and advised him to join the Quakers, 'he being endowed with the gifts and qualities they so much admire and recommend': *ODNB*, sub Boulton, Richard; H. J. Cook, 'Sir John Colbatch and Augustan Medicine: Experimentalism, Character and Entrepreneurialism', *Annals of Science*, 47 (1990), 498–501.

the Anglican fold.⁹⁹ Throughout, many who opted to remain loyal to their consciences did so in the hope that a resolution was at hand, and that plans to negotiate some form of 'comprehensive' settlement of church affairs would lead to a wider healing in the body politic. Such thinking, for example, was implicit in the work of the Presbyterian Richard Baxter, and was shared by men like John Hickes (d. 1685), a West Country dissenting minister, who expressed the wish, in the wake of the passing of the Second Conventicle Act:

that the Smiles, and Favours of Royal Majesty, may be as a Sovereign Balsome, to heal those many Wounds that are now made in our Body Politick, that it may at last be reduced to an Eucrasy, or a Sound, and healthful Constitution; but if that cannot or must not be, he equally desireth, that they who feel the Smart, that Sigh, and Groan under the Anguish of them, may be of a Sedate Spirit, and to be persuaded into a patient Tolleration thereof; till the chieftest Physitian by his Infallible and unerring Wisdom, continue and provide a remedy that may infallibly, and with irresistible Energy, effecteth the Cure.¹⁰⁰

Like much that flowed from the pens of Restoration dissenters, Hickes' pious wishes proved to be little more than wishful thinking. He was eventually executed for his part in Monmouth's rebellion in 1685. We should not lose sight, however, both of the genuine nature of the aspirations of men such as Hickes, as well as the very real suffering, mental as much as physical, that informed the public expression of such sentiments. While the evidence for the material suffering of post-Restoration dissenters is all too evident in the financial and other punishments inflicted upon them by the courts, less obvious are the mental scars that accompanied the membership of proscribed religious groups in this period. Roman Catholics, of course, had long suffered under such restraints. For many former puritans, however, who had until recently governed the country, exclusion from access to the agencies of social and political power, combined with legal restraints and punishments, proved a bitter pill to swallow. In a number of cases, it would appear to have generated real sickness, often manifest in a range of complaints and neuroses including melancholy, madness, and bewitchment. Richard Baxter, who considered himself something of an expert in the diagnosis and treatment of such illnesses, noted in 1670 that:

I was troubled this Year with multitudes of melancholy Persons, from several parts of the Land, some of high Quality, some of low, some very exquisitely learned, some

⁹⁹ For recent examples of scholarship that paint a more nuanced and complex picture of the nature of religious divisions and the porous boundary between conformity and Dissent, see J. Miller, 'Containing Division in Restoration Norwich', *English Historical Review*, 121 (2006), 1019–47; J. Miller, *Cities Divided: Politics and Religion in English Provincial Towns 1660–1722* (Oxford, 2007), 132–55; T. Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and His Kingdoms 1660–1685* (London, 2005), 54 and *passim*. For an earlier study based on the diocese of Exeter, which points in the same direction, see P. W. Jackson, 'Nonconformists and Society in Devon, 1660–1689', PhD thesis (Exeter, 1986).

¹⁰⁰ [J. Hickes], *A True and Faithful Narrative, of the Unjust and Illegal Sufferings, and Oppressions of Many Christians . . . under, and by Several of His Majesties Justices of Peace . . . in the County of Devon* (1671), 3–4. For Hickes, see *Cal. Rev.*, 260.

unlearned . . . I know not how it came to pass, but if men fell melancholy I must hear from them or see them (more than any Physician that I know).¹⁰¹

The year 1670, of course, witnessed a renewal of persecution with the passage of the Second Conventicle Act and may have exacerbated tensions and anxiety within nonconformist circles. Dissenting ministers, in particular, would appear to have been susceptible to bouts of melancholia and mental anguish. Calamy, in his hagiographic collection of biographies of those ministers ejected in the early 1660s, frequently alluded to their mental suffering and tendency to lapse into melancholic fits. So too did Richard Baxter.¹⁰² Those afflicted included Thomas Rosewell (1630–1692), a lifelong sufferer from melancholy whose condition can only have worsened after his trial for treason in 1685. ‘Trouble of mind’, it would appear, was part and parcel of the job for many dissenting clergymen. The London minister Timothy Rogers (1658–1728) was so frequently afflicted by melancholy that he decided to put pen to paper and offer his own thoughts on the subject as a means of offering consolation to fellow sufferers. In doing so, he was much encouraged by ministers such as Richard Gilpin and George Porter, many of whose empathetic letters, published by Rogers, testify to a veritable epidemic of melancholy in nonconformist circles.¹⁰³ New entries into the nonconformist fold, moreover, were not immune from such mental anguish. A number of Richard Frankland’s pupils, all destined for the ministry, succumbed to melancholia, which in some cases inhibited and even prevented their ability to preach.¹⁰⁴ It is impossible to

¹⁰¹ Sylvester (ed.), *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, iii, 85. Baxter would later devote a whole chapter in his book on witchcraft to exploring the links between ‘enthusiasm’, melancholy, and diabolism, in which he argued that the godly were more prone than the reprobate to such afflictions: Baxter, *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, 171–85, esp. 172. The frequency with which Baxter alluded to melancholy in his writings led Samuel Clifford (d. 1726) to extract and publish Baxter’s thoughts on the subject as a separate collection after his death: S. Clifford, *The Signs and Causes of Melancholy with Directions Suited to the Case of Those who are Afflicted with It. Collected out of the Works of Richard Baxter* (London, 1716).

¹⁰² *Cal. Rev.*, 4, 10, 20, 28, 84, 102, 115, 137, 141, 142, 175, 180, 183, 206, 232, 233, 235, 238, 277, 295, 296, 319, 340, 351, 360–1, 395, 399, 401, 425, 476, 496, 524, 531; E. Calamy, *An Abridgement of Mr Baxter’s History of His Life and Times. With an Account of the Ministers, &c who were Ejected after the Restoration of King Charles II*, 2 vols (London, 1713), ii, 197; W. Bagshaw, *De Spiritualibus Peccis* (London, 1702), 97; *ODNB*, sub Holcroft, Francis. For examples cited by Baxter, see, for example, N. H. Keeble and G. F. Nuttall (eds), *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1991), ii, 159, 169, 292; Sylvester (ed.), *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, iii, 188.

¹⁰³ *ODNB*, sub Rosewell, Thomas; T. Rogers, *Practical Discourses on Sickness and Recovery in Several Sermons* (London, 1691); T. Rogers, *A Discourse Concerning Trouble of Minde and the Disease of Melancholy* (London, 1691). Rogers was a Presbyterian minister in London, whose melancholic fits began in 1682—a year of growing persecution for those of his religious persuasion. The fits continued on and off for much of his life, temporarily relieved by trips to the country sponsored by wealthy patrons of his preaching in London: *ODNB*. For discussion of Rogers, Baxter, and ‘puritan’ approaches to melancholy, see especially J. Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul: Religion, Moral Philosophy and Madness in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2007), 103–28. For the ‘spiritual physician’ Gilpin, see above, 185–6.

¹⁰⁴ F. Nicholson and E. Axon, *The Older Nonconformity in Kendal. A History of the Unitarian Chapel . . . with the Transcripts of the Registers and Notices of the Nonconformist Academies of Richard Frankland, MA, and Caleb Rotherham, DD* (Kendal, 1915), 544, 546, 567, 568. For other examples of first-generation nonconformist preachers suffering from melancholy and related conditions, see *ODNB*, sub Ashwood, John (1657–1706); Billingsley, John (1657–1722); Brown, Simon (c.1680–1732); Fleming, Robert (c.1660–1716). For well-documented cases of lay dissenters labouring under the same

quantify such suffering with any precision, but it does appear to have been a recurrent theme in nonconformist annals. Typical, perhaps, was the case of Uzziell Chauncey, nephew of the Bristol dissenter and physician Ichabod Chauncey (1635–1691), who committed suicide in 1696. Testifying at the coroner's inquest, Ichabod's widow Mary described how a number of her former husband's family suffered from 'distraction' and that Uzziell had grown very melancholy prior to his death.¹⁰⁵ Not surprisingly, the dissenters' enemies were not slow to capitalize upon such incidents, evidence for many of the pathological consequences of succumbing to 'enthusiasm'. A government spy based in Holland thus reported in 1686 that the fugitive and rebel plotter Robert Jenison had 'grown soe frantickly madd through terrors of conscience' that he was now seeing visions of his dead brother. In like fashion, the Tory surgeon Hugh Rider reported that a woman tried to slit her throat in a fit of despair after attending a conventicle.¹⁰⁶

If members of nonconformist congregations and their leaders were increasingly susceptible to afflictions of the mind and mental breakdown, then it was equally the case that help was close at hand. One of the most striking features of post-Restoration dissent was the extent to which ministers now performed the dual function of caring for the bodies *and* souls of members of their congregations. Excluded from many other occupations and professions, medicine thus constituted a congenial and often profitable career option for dissenting clergymen. Many, moreover, were lauded for their skill in combining the two roles. The West Country minister Samuel Stoddon, for example, who described himself as 'medico-theologus', gained a reputation for treating mad and distracted persons. He also supplied Baxter with details of his attempted cure of a bewitched Exeter apprentice.¹⁰⁷ Other dissenting ministers who specialized in the cure of the mad and distracted include John Courtman and Edward Richardson, the latter having devised a novel form of water therapy for the insane based on the work of the Flemish iatrochemist Jan Baptist van Helmont.¹⁰⁸ Such skills, moreover, were not

distemper, see the cases of the Sussex merchant Samuel Jeake the younger (1652–1699), the nonconformist patron Katherine Gell (1624–1671), and author Hannah Allen: Hunter and Gregory (eds), *Astrological Diary of . . . Samuel Jeake of Rye 1652–1699*, 23n, 24, 51n, 52, 58, 98, 132, 153–4, 193, 259; ODNB, sub Gell, Katherine; H. Allen, *Satan His Methods and Malice Baffled: A Narrative of God's Gracious Dealings with that Choice Christian Mrs Hannah Allen* (London, 1683). Allen's husband, Charles Hatt (d. 1709), wrote to Baxter in 1691 with an account of a haunted house at Kinton, Worcestershire, twenty-four years earlier: Baxter, *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, 71–3.

¹⁰⁵ BL, Add. MS 5540, fos 30v–31r.

¹⁰⁶ BL, Add. MS 41,819, fo. 20r; H. Rider, *Practical Chirurgery* (London, 1689), 89.

¹⁰⁷ *Cal. Rev.*, 64–5; G. M. Doe, 'Samuel Stoddon', *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 27 (1895), 222–7; Bate, *Declaration of Indulgence*, Appendix 7, xxiv; Baxter, *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, 51. Stoddon shared the nonconformist predilection for special providences. In 1666, he suggested that God was particularly active in 'crossing the course of Nature by strange Signs and Prodigies such, and so many, as no age in England could ever parallel': S. Stoddon, *The Voice of the Rod, or God's Controversie Pleaded with Man. Being a Plain and Brief Discourse on Mich. 6. 9.* (London, 1668), 17.

¹⁰⁸ *Cal. Rev.*, 138–9; F. M. van Helmont, *The Spirit of Diseases* (London, 1694), 43. For the attraction of the modern Dutch medical schools for English nonconformists after 1660, see P. Elmer, 'Medicine, Witchcraft and the Politics of Healing in Late-Seventeenth-Century England', in O. P. Grell and A. Cunningham (eds), *Medicine and Religion in Enlightenment Europe* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2007), 223–41.

confined to the ministerial ranks. Timothy Gibbard (or Gibbons), the brother-in-law of the dissenting minister-cum-physician John Singleton (d. 1706), was widely hailed as an expert in this field, renowned for his diagnosis and cure of those who were suspected of being bewitched. Women, too, might claim authority in such matters.¹⁰⁹ In 1664, Alice Waterman, a sectary from Hurstbourne Tarrant in Hampshire, was accused by local churchwardens of being 'very industrious in seducing of others, & is very busie with any that are troubled in minde or Greived in body'.¹¹⁰ As this and other examples suggest, tending the sick, particularly those suffering from mental afflictions, provided a valuable opportunity to either make new converts or bolster the flagging spirits of those dissenters subjected to legal and other forms of persecution.

SEARCHING FOR CONSENSUS: LATITUDINARIANISM, DISSENT, AND PROOF OF WITCHCRAFT IN RESTORATION ENGLAND

While discussion of witchcraft formed a consistent theme in the discourse of post-Restoration Dissent, nonconformists did not monopolize such debate. It also featured prominently in the work and thought of a number of Anglican conformists, mostly 'latitudinarians', who sought to forge links with their former dissenting colleagues in the hope of re-establishing a single and undivided Church of England. In my study of the Irish miracle healer Valentine Greatrakes (1629–1683), I set out to show how Greatrakes' mission to heal the sick received the enthusiastic support of many moderate Anglicans, both clergy and laity, as part of a wider eirenic desire to heal the wounds of a divided body politic. Like Greatrakes, they also adhered to a providentialist world-view in which belief in spirits, witches, and other prodigies figured prominently. They were drawn from a variety of backgrounds and included magistrates, clergymen, and academics. At the same time, they shared a passion for the 'new science', many like John Beale and Robert Boyle featuring prominently as members of the Hartlib circle in the 1650s, while others joined Boyle in supporting the early initiatives of the Royal Society in the 1660s.¹¹¹

The use of the label 'latitudinarian' to describe those who sought to articulate and devise a peaceful settlement of Britain's religious divisions after 1660 has

¹⁰⁹ Drage, *Daimonomageia*, 15, 20, 21; *Cal. Rev.*, 443. Gibbards' practice would appear to have been centred on the town of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, though he apparently resided in the nearby village of Harborough Magna in Warwickshire. In all probability, he is the same as the Timothy Gibbard (MD Caen, 1675), who was a student at Christ Church, Oxford, at the same time as his brother-in-law John Singleton. The identity of Singleton's brother-in-law as Dr Gibbard, not Gibbons (*pace* Calamy), is proven by the will of the latter's sister Hester in 1712. The Gibbards hailed from Wyken, near Coventry, where one Timothy Gibbard (father of the above?) was an active committeeman in the city in the 1650s: Foster, ii, 559; TNA, PROB 11/540, fos 123v–125r [will of Hester Singleton, 24 April 1712; proved 20 May 1714]; A. Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620–1660* (Cambridge, 1987), 240–1, 298, 313.

¹¹⁰ Hampshire Record Office, 21M65 B1/37, under deanery of Andover.

¹¹¹ See Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist*, 132–53.

proven controversial. John Spurr, for example, has largely rejected its value as a meaningful descriptor of religious opinions after 1660, claiming that few Anglicans ever appropriated the term and that its use was largely confined to nonconformist polemics aimed at the self-interested and fraudulent moderation of some conformists within the restored Church.¹¹² Others, such as Richard Ashcraft, have gone further by suggesting that historians have essentially misconceived the true nature of Restoration latitudinarianism, which, he argues, has been too broadly defined so that 'it only serves to obscure or conceal the political differences between Anglicans and dissenters'. Redefining latitudinarianism as a movement within the restored Church aimed at promoting a policy of comprehension, he suggests that its proponents remained wedded to the idea of persecution as a legitimate response to those nonconformists who refused to conform under more moderate terms of communion. Latitudinarianism for Ashcraft was 'not a moderate middle ground between contending extremes: it is rather, part of one of the extremes. It is the acceptable face of the persecution of religious dissent'.¹¹³

While there is much to commend in such approaches to this thorny issue, I would argue that the term itself, suitably redefined, does retain historical validity. Particularly helpful in this respect is the work of William Spellman, who, in rejecting the idea that latitudinarianism represented a fixed ideological position or set of religious principles, has argued instead for a movement 'linked more by personal friendship and a common point of view than by a specific set of political or ecclesiological tenets'. He goes on to suggest that the membership of this 'school' fluctuated in response to the shifts in Church and state in the period after 1660.¹¹⁴ Both points are critical, I believe, in any attempt to appreciate the complexities of the religious situation in England after 1660. As other studies have suggested, this was a period in which religious affiliation was unstable and religious labels were rarely fixed. Individuals—variously described as semi-conformists, partial conformists, or, in the evocative words of one Anglican clergyman, 'halfe-way men'—frequently moved between dissent and the established Church.¹¹⁵ At the same time, as Spellman intimates, bonds of friendship and mutual respect among clergymen on both sides of the religious divide frequently acted to negate the impact of the divisiveness implicit in the Restoration settlement of church affairs. In many cases, such bonds, as I suggest in my study of Greatrakes' followers, were forged in the 1650s when puritans and non-puritans frequently rubbed shoulders in the universities and worked alongside each other in the association movements

¹¹² J. Spurr, "'Latitudinarianism" and the Restoration Church', *Historical Journal*, 31 (1988), 61–82.

¹¹³ R. Ashcraft, 'Latitudinarianism and Toleration: Historical Myth Versus Political History', in R. Kroll, R. Ashcraft, and P. Zagorin (eds), *Philosophy, Science and Religion in England, 1640–1700* (Cambridge, 1992), 151–77.

¹¹⁴ W. M. Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660–1700* (Athens, GA, and London, 1993), 5.

¹¹⁵ The term 'half-way men' was devised in 1683 by Henry Halstead (c.1641–1728), rector of Stansfield in Suffolk, to describe a group of fellow clergy in the county 'who honour the King and the Church but not from such Studdie and conscientious principles as other men do': Bodl., Tanner MS 34, fo. 101.

established throughout England during the Cromwellian era.¹¹⁶ While such relationships often endured beyond 1660, it is equally evident that shifts in government policy on religion, alongside the reluctance of many dissenters to acquiesce in official schemes of 'comprehension', led many early latitudinarians to rethink, and in some cases to alter, their attitudes to dissent. One such turning point would appear to have been reached in 1666, in the wake of the plague and fire in London, when, according to Richard Baxter, many young Anglican clergymen among the ranks of the latitudinarians, eager for preferment, 'began to change their temper, and to contract some malignity against those that were much more Religious than themselves'.¹¹⁷ Further damage to the latitudinarian cause inevitably followed the heated debates engendered by the Exclusion Crisis in the early 1680s, only for a new latitudinarian awakening to take root in the wake of the Glorious Revolution in the following decade.

Latitudinarianism, then, is a slippery term, its origins complex and with no fixed 'membership' or set of beliefs. Its adherents, however, did share certain values and attitudes that can best be summed up as a desire to avoid the pitfalls of doctrinal controversy in favour of an inclusive church settlement that stigmatized immorality over dissent. In the words of Jonathan Andrews and Andrew Scull, it 'preached sobriety and moderation in all things and recommended a faith expressed through charitable and moral works rather than adversarial or grandiose expressions of belief'.¹¹⁸ Crucially, as I argue in my study of Greatrakes, early Restoration latitudinarians were also prominent advocates of belief in spirits and witchcraft, which they sought to defend on principles derived from the 'new science'. Here, then, was a further important bridge between moderate Anglicanism and Dissent, which encouraged collaboration across the confessional divide and offered a potential platform, free of doctrinal or ecclesiological debate, for religious reconciliation and unity.

One of the most important features of many of the cases of witchcraft that occurred in England after 1660 concerns the extent to which they often featured cross-denominational cooperation between ministers drawn from across the sectarian divide. Many of the instances of witchcraft and related phenomena cited by Richard Baxter, for example, in his *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, demonstrate a willingness on the part of conformable ministers to cooperate with their dissenting

¹¹⁶ The theme of continuity in the Church straddling the divide of 1660 forms the starting point of John Spurr's seminal study of the Restoration Church: J. Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England 1646–1689* (New Haven, CT and London, 1991). Much the same point is made by Gerald Aylmer, who has argued that 'common sense suggests that [latitudinarianism] was indeed applied to a body of people and opinions within the Church which did, if only indirectly and to a limited extent, owe something to the traditions of Great Tew, but also to the passive conformists of the 1640s and 1650s, those who had not been committed to the Puritan cause, still less to the Directory of Worship or the principle of a republic': G. Aylmer, 'Collective Mentalities in Mid Seventeenth-Century England: IV Cross Currents: Neutrals, Trimmers and Others', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 39 (1989), 18.

¹¹⁷ Sylvester (ed.), *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, iii, 19.

¹¹⁸ J. Andrews and A. Scull, *Undertaker of the Mind: John Monro and Mad-Doctoring in Eighteenth-Century England* (Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles, CA, and London, 2001), 78.

colleagues on such matters. Baxter's informants included the Anglican ministers John Jephcott, Thomas Tilson, and May Hill. Jephcott (1640–1713), as minister of Evesham in Worcestershire, supplied Baxter with a detailed account of a case of witchcraft in the town that led to the execution of a local witch at the county assizes in 1652. A protégé of the moderate bishop William Lloyd (1627–1717), he was later accused of committing adultery with a witch by a High Church political adversary in 1703.¹¹⁹ Tilson (c.1641–1702), the vicar of Aylesford in Kent and a professed stranger to Baxter, recounted the story of the appearance of an apparition at nearby Rochester in 1691.¹²⁰ In the case of May Hill (d. 1700), rector of Beckington in Somerset, a brief pamphlet account of the case, in which two witches were tried and acquitted at the Taunton assizes in 1690, hinted at close collaboration between minister and nonconformists in a parish with a sizeable population of dissenters.¹²¹

Other cases collected by Baxter for publication in 1691 suggest the likelihood of an ecumenical element to the investigation of incidents of witchcraft in Restoration England. In 1679, for example, one Zacheus Crab, an Exeter apprentice and a member of the congregation of the ejected minister Thomas Atkins (d. 1685), failed to receive relief from suspected bewitchment, despite the joint ministrations of a local Anglican minister-cum-physician Edward Pridham (d. 1687) and the dissenter Samuel Stoddon, who was held in high esteem in such cases.¹²² Likewise, in an earlier case related to the bewitchment of a godly maid from Honiton in Devon, there is further evidence to suggest that incidents such as these helped to encourage interdenominational collaboration at the local level. The girl in question, Elizabeth Brooker, was allegedly bewitched by a woman to whom she had refused to give a pin. She was subsequently examined and operated upon by the surgeon Anthony Smith (for whom, see above, p. 205), who extracted a pin from her body before an audience of godly ministers' wives at

¹¹⁹ Baxter, *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, 44–6; A. Tindall Hart, *William Lloyd 1627–1717: Bishop, Politician, Author and Prophet* (London, 1952), 197; Rev. D. Robertson (ed.), *Diary of Francis Evans, Secretary to Bishop Lloyd, 1699–1706* (Oxford, Worcestershire Hist. Soc., 1903), 132. The latitudinarian Lloyd would appear to have shared Jephcott's interest in the occult. He is almost certainly the Mr Lloyd who supplied Joseph Glanvill with a detailed account of the haunting of a Radnorshire man. Lloyd held various Welsh benefices between 1668 and 1680, when he was appointed as bishop of St Asaph: Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, ii, 278–80. For Lloyd, see *ODNB*.

¹²⁰ Baxter, *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, 147–51.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 74–80; Anon., *Great News from the West of England* (London, 1689), 2; TNA, ASSI 23/3, 1 April 1690; SARS, Q/SR/113/34–40; 114/1. Hill had been minister of Beckington since 1668. He married Anne Huish, the daughter of the previous incumbent Alexander Huish (1595–1668), a celebrated biblical scholar and staunch royalist: *ODNB*, sub Huish, Alexander. In his letter to Baxter, dated 4 April 1691, Hill referred to the involvement of a local JP, identified only as Esquire Player of Castle Cary. William Player was in fact an amateur natural historian who forwarded fossil specimens from his estate at Castle Cary to the eminent geologist and natural philosopher John Woodward (d. 1728) in the early eighteenth century: J. Woodward, *An Attempt Towards a Natural History of the Fossils of England* (London, 1729), 41, 74.

¹²² Baxter, *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, 47–52; *Cal. Rev.*, 18, 451, 464–5. Calamy describes Pridham as successor to Robert Snow (d. 1668), the ejected rector of Morchard Bishop, Devon, in 1662. Pridham was reputed to have 'shew'd him great Respect, and boarded with him for some time'. For Stoddon, see above, 209.

the home of the Exeter nonconformist John Hoppin (d. 1705).¹²³ Baxter's informant, Smith, adds little more to our understanding of this event. However, another account, transcribed by Baxter's colleague Henry Sampson (1629–1700), an eminent physician and prominent figure in London dissenting circles, provides illuminating insights into how such incidents were often stage-managed in order to achieve maximum publicity and in this case facilitate dialogue between men and women of opposed religious views. In Sampson's telling of the story, the case of the bewitched girl, a servant of Mrs Elizabeth Hieron, who was the mother of the ejected minister Samuel Hieron, was taken up by a local gentleman named Mr Main or Maior, 'a learned Man, a Gentleman of Estate, & . . . one of the most considerable men in ye town'. In all probability this was a reference to the radical schoolmaster Zachary Mayne (1631–1694), who possessed an estate at nearby Dalwood. A puritan by background, he was also renowned as something of a religious experimentalist, dabbling in a wide range of heterodox opinions. On this occasion, he seems to have used his position in the local community to promote a broad-based, eirenical response to the travails of the sick maid. Sampson, for example, describes how Mayne went out of his way to ensure that proof positive of the girl's condition was obtained by choosing four women of different religious backgrounds (an Anglican, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Quaker) to watch over the maid. On receiving their approval, he then approached a local physician and the town's minister to judge the case. Both men gave their assent, and in a further spirit of ecumenical collaboration they requested that the various churches in the neighbourhood pray for the girl's recovery. There is no evidence, however, that the case ever went to court, and Mayne's original plan to publish details of the incident was scuppered by Honiton's minister, 'who told him, passages were so strange, 'twould cause people to call in question their Veracity, beside it could not be told without entrenching upon modesty'.¹²⁴

¹²³ Baxter, *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, 65–9. Among those present were Mrs Hoppin, the minister's wife, Mrs Ford (probably the wife of another dissenting minister, Thomas Ford), and one Mrs Gold (probably the wife of James Gould, a wealthy puritan mercer in the city).

¹²⁴ BL, Add. MS 4460, fos 77v–78v. Mayne, who married the daughter of a Honiton merchant, was a former Oxford scholar who had benefited from the patronage of Cromwell in the 1650s. An Arminian Independent by background, he dabbled in Socinian and Arian beliefs. Mayne also preached for a brief period, but was never ordained, being forced to resign his fellowship at Oxford at the Restoration. He was widely praised for his intellectual abilities and eventually turned to teaching. Sometime around 1671, he became a schoolmaster at Dalwood and was later appointed headmaster of Exeter Grammar School. In 1694, he wrote to the Royal Society concerning a waterspout at Topsham. In his correspondence with John Newburgh in 1669, in which he referred to the case of the abstinent Martha Taylor (see note 28, this chapter), he also explained his decision to teach children, for men are 'so engaged in fancied opinions and parties, that there is noe coming at them'. Two years later, he was seeking funds to provide a stipend for a preaching minister in the parish: *ODNB*, sub Mayne, Zachary; *Cal. Rev.*, 346–7; *Gentleman's Magazine* (1794), 11–12. In Sampson's account, the minister of Honiton is described as one Mr Tanner. I have not been able to locate anyone of this name who might fit the description. He was almost certainly not the same as Thomas Tanner (d. 1682), vicar of nearby Colyton from 1666 to 1676, and an inveterate opponent of nonconformity. The rector of Honiton from 1663 until his death in 1699 was Ozias Upcott. Given that he was presented to the place by Mayne's father-in-law, Gabriel Barnes, by right of the advowson granted originally to the nonconformist Sir William Courtenay and Amy Sourton, wife of the previous incumbent Francis Sourton, ejected in 1662, it seems probable that Mr Tanner was in fact Upcott: T. C. Hughes, 'Some

That Richard Baxter should have sought to publicize accounts of witchcraft and related preternatural phenomena in order to build bridges with fellow Protestants of different persuasions hardly comes as a surprise. He spent most of his life, both before and after the Restoration, searching for a solution to the Church's problems that might embrace the idea of a single, broad-based ecclesiastical polity. At the same time, he retained a lifelong interest in the collection of verifiable instances of preternatural activity, including witchcraft, which, as I have previously noted, may well have formed part of the manifesto of those county associations that Baxter pioneered in the 1650s. At an early stage, Baxter envisaged a county-wide network of ministers engaged in the process of collecting trustworthy accounts for inclusion in Matthew Poole's design to create a 'Register of Illustrious Providences'. His hopes were shared by moderate clergymen like John Beale (1608–1683), a great admirer of Baxter, who played an important role in establishing such networks in Herefordshire in the 1650s.¹²⁵ In the same vein, it is worth noting that a number of clergy in Baxter's own Worcestershire association, who, like Beale, also conformed at the Restoration, figured prominently in witch trials in the county in the 1660s. William Shaw (d. 1682), for example, rector of Rushock, was successfully sued for his role in orchestrating accusations of witchcraft against one of his parishioners in 1661. He was accused, among other things, of swimming the suspected witch.¹²⁶ Likewise William Willes, minister at Cleeve Prior, was responsible for a series of presentments against one William Ballard, who was accused of a range of offences, including profanation of the sabbath as well as visiting sorcerers, cursing, healing, and abusing the scriptures by the use of spells.¹²⁷ Both Shaw and Willes were early members of Baxter's Worcestershire association, as was John Boraston (d. 1688), the episcopalian minister of Bewdley and neighbouring Ribbesford, who had witnessed a supposed case of diabolical possession at Bewdley during the civil war.¹²⁸

Notes on the Rectors of Honiton since the Commonwealth', *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 30 (1898), 127. For Sourton, who continued to preach in and around Honiton until his death in 1689, and his relationship with the godly Courtenays of Powderham, see *Cal. Rev.*, 452.

¹²⁵ W. Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium: Protestant Imperialism and the English Revolution* (London, 1979), 30–3; Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist*, 148–50.

¹²⁶ Bodl., Rawlinson MS Eng. Misc. e. 479, fo. 396v; WRO, QS 110/97/11, 74; G. Nuttall, 'The Worcestershire Association: Its Membership', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 1 (1950), 202.

¹²⁷ P. Braby, 'Churchwardens' Presentments from the Vale of Evesham, 1660–1717: Part II', *Vale of Evesham Historical Society Research Papers*, 6 (1977), 110. Willes was at Cleeve Prior by 1650, and was named as a member of Baxter's Worcestershire Association in 1654; Nuttall, 'Worcestershire Association', 201.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 197–206. Bewdley was a hotbed of religious conflict and dissent in the mid-seventeenth century. Boraston, as an ardent ceremonialist and royalist, was widely abhorred in the 1640s. Like Baxter and other puritan moderates, however, he was averse to the growth of religious extremism and was probably drawn to Baxter in the 1650s through the two men's mutual loathing for 'fanatical' sects such as the Baptists and Quakers.

GLANVILL'S *SADUCISMUS TRIUMPHATUS* (1682):
DEMONOLOGY AND LATITUDINARIAN MANIFESTO

Baxter, of course, as well as publishing his own collection of witchcraft and related stories just prior to his death in 1691, was an avid supporter of a similar project spearheaded by the Anglican minister Joseph Glanvill (1636–1680), with the support of his Cambridge colleague Henry More, in the 1660s. The two men shared much in common. As an early exponent of the rational, scientific enquiry pioneered by the Royal Society, Glanvill admired Baxter's commitment to the rational investigation of providences, which mirrored his own. Both men were also early advocates of a broad-based and peaceful settlement of the nation's religious divisions. In Baxter's case, the commitment to such a goal was a consistent theme of his life's work, his aim in founding the association movement in the 1650s being to bring together men 'adhering to no Faction; neither Episcopal, Presbyterian, nor Independent, as to parties; but desiring Union, and loving that which is good in all'.¹²⁹ In Glanvill's case, it is probable that his own latitudinarian inclinations were partly the product of a puritan upbringing followed by an Oxford education in the 1650s and his appointment in 1658 as chaplain to the radical Cromwellian and provost of Eton, Francis Rous (d. 1659).¹³⁰ His religious moderation and support for a comprehensive religious settlement, which, typically, did not incorporate the legal toleration of dissent, can be found articulated throughout his writings in the 1660s and thereafter. In 1668, for example, he professed indifference to those who differed with him on religious matters, hoping in the process to 'secure Charity for all the diversities of Belief, and equally offer my Friendship and Converses to the several sects and Perswasions, that stick to the plain Principles of the Gospel and a Vertuous Life, overlooking their particular fondnesses and follies'. A year later, he once again marvelled at the propensity for fellow Christians to engage in constant feuding. 'Such strifes among Brethren are Unnatural and Diabolical', he argued, adding that 'Our God is one, and we have the same common Saviour; we profess one Gospel, and believe the same fundamental Ordinances, and since we are agreed in These, what is there left, that is worth the heat of a Dispute? What, that can justify a division?'¹³¹

It was sentiments such as these that partly informed his design to publish on witchcraft and related phenomena. As he explained in the preface to the *Saducismus Triumphatus*, religious controversy and division made men oblivious to the wider dangers of atheism and disbelief, as manifest in the growing dismissal of

¹²⁹ See especially DWL, Baxter Correspondence, i, fo. 170; ii, fo. 138; J. Cope, *Joseph Glanvill: Anglican Apologist* (St Louis, MO, 1956), 7–10, 30–1; Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 168–9.

¹³⁰ ODNB, sub Glanvill, Joseph. It is just possible that the mystically inclined Rous, well known to Samuel Hartlib and his circle, may have stimulated Glanvill's early interest in witchcraft: Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist*, 145n.

¹³¹ J. Glanvill, *Plus Ultra: Or, The Progress and Advancement of Knowledge Since the Days of Aristotle* (London, 1668), 140; J. Glanvill, *Catholic Charity Recommended in a Sermon, Before the Right Honorable the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London* (London, 1669), 1–2.

phenomena such as witchcraft. Rather than continue such pointless debates and 'high Speculations', Glanvill suggested instead that Christians ought to focus on those clear proofs of Christianity 'that come nearest the sence, which indeed strike our minds fullest, and leave the most lasting impressions'. Crucially, such sentiments were also shared by the vast majority of Glanvill's informants, mostly fellow clergy, who supplied Glanvill and his colleague Henry More with large numbers of instances of witchcraft and related phenomena for publication. The end result was a work, the *Saducismus Triumphatus*, published in its final version in 1681, which reads as a veritable who's who of early Restoration latitudinarianism. In the first instance, however, Glanvill did not envisage producing a mere compilation of case histories or 'matters of fact' relating to witchcraft. The early editions of Glanvill's numerous discussions on the subject were largely theoretical, aimed at countering the perceived drift of the nation toward atheism. At the same time, as Jonathan Barry has neatly demonstrated, where they depended on practical experience of witchcraft, Glanvill was drawn time and again to his discussions with a Somerset magistrate, Robert Hunt (c.1609–1680), who kept copies of the depositions taken in various witchcraft cases in which he had been involved, and who put these at the disposal of Glanvill from as early as 1666.¹³²

Hunt, in many respects, fits precisely the kind of profile that I have tried to suggest informed the thinking of many in Restoration England who sought to publicly defend belief in witchcraft. His religious and political background in particular marks him out as a moderate, one who supported the restoration of the monarchy and 'shared Glanvill's ecclesiological position, which involved a strong defence of the rights of the established church, sympathy for Presbyterians . . . and for a Protestant comprehension against both popery and radical sectarianism, and an emphasis on morals and sober worship as the essence of true religion'.¹³³ Moreover, like others of his ilk, his career as a magistrate and politician, both locally and nationally, straddled the boundary of 1660. Though royalist inclined, he nonetheless married the daughter of a prominent Dorset puritan and served the interregnum government of Somerset in various capacities, including as JP and sheriff. He was equally 'ambidextrous' when it came to arranging the marriages of his daughters. Elizabeth married Henry Bull (1630–1691), the son of William Bull of Shapwick (1595–1676), an old friend and colleague of Hunt's who would appear to have shared his moderation and distaste for partisan politics. Hunt's son-in-law Henry, on the other hand, did not follow in his father's footsteps, becoming a staunch royalist and Tory. This was also in stark contrast to another of Hunt's sons-in-law, Richard Brodrepp (c.1639–1707), whose family background and political orientation was distinctly parliamentarian and later Whig. The tensions generated by such relations, and Hunt's desire to pursue a middle way with regard to the Restoration

¹³² J. Barry, 'Robert Hunt and the Somerset Witches', in J. Barry, *Witchcraft and Demonology in South-West England*, 14–57. Barry provides a comprehensive analysis of the various editions of Glanvill's works on witchcraft, and their relationship to the various extant copies and versions of Robert Hunt's 'Book of Examinations'.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 29.

settlement, were clearly acute and may well have disposed him to accept a providentialist world-view in response to the deepening divisions that he witnessed all round him. This is readily apparent, for example, in Hunt's surviving correspondence with William Bull. By 1663, the letters take on a despairing tone as it becomes increasingly evident to Hunt that persecution rather than accommodation was to dominate Parliament's approach to dissent. Shortly thereafter, he records an encounter with a witch as well as providing various accounts of prodigious births among local people and livestock. By early 1665, Hunt was clearly of the view that the natural world was out of kilter and that its impact would be felt throughout the wider body politic. He then mentions for the first time 'this unhappy businesse of witches . . . which hath given mee very much trouble', a reference no doubt to his investigation, as JP, of a major outbreak of witchcraft in the vicinity of Wincanton, the transcripts of which were subsequently lent to Glanvill.¹³⁴ Two years later, witchcraft struck closer to home. In December 1667, Hunt described in some detail in a letter to Bull the bewitchment of his own daughter, Elizabeth (d. 1679), the wife of Richard Brodrepp of Mapperton, Dorset, at the hands of a local witch, though, as Barry has pointed out, Hunt's tone throughout these letters was largely prosaic, bordering on stoical. Hunt's acceptance and espousal of the reality of witchcraft was not then that of a fanatic in the mould of East Anglia's 'witchfinder general' Matthew Hopkins. On the contrary, it would appear to have proceeded from a view of the world in which it was simply to be expected that events such as these would naturally ensue as a result of the disorderly and divisive state of affairs in the body politic. Hunt's predicament, of course, was exacerbated by the fact that he and his family and in-laws were charged with managing the fallout from such events. Under the circumstances—and it is worth noting that in the same letter Hunt wrote to William Bull describing the bewitchment of his daughter he also referred to his recent receipt of a letter from the Privy Council asking all JPs to provide the names and details of imprisoned nonconformists—it is perhaps not surprising that Hunt was so readily convinced of the reality of diabolism and the presence of witches in the day-to-day lives of his fellow countrymen and women.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Hunt's correspondence with Bull is in Bristol University Library, DM 155. I am immensely grateful to Jonathan Barry for bringing these important letters to my notice many years ago. Much of what follows very much echoes his own analysis of Hunt's religious and political background, and their impact upon his attitude to witchcraft. For Hunt's religious moderation, see, for example, DM 155/124, 125, 128. For his citation of prodigies and witchcraft in 1665, see DM 155/98. For Hunt's relationship with the Bulls and Brodrepps, see Barry, 'Robert Hunt', 16, 28–9 and the sources cited therein. The limits of Henry Bull's Toryism are perhaps also evident in the will of his widow, Elizabeth, who left a silver teapot and table linen 'with the impression of King William and Queen Mary in it' to her godson John Hunt: TNA, PROB 11/533, fo. 220r [20 July 1711; proved 17 June 1713].

¹³⁵ Bristol University Library, DM 155/103. Hunt's Dorset relations, both through his own marriage and that of his daughter Catherine, were strongly tainted by their past associations with the parliamentary cause and support for the interregnum. For the Brownes of Frampton, Dorset, see Henning, *House of Commons, 1660–1690*, i, 734–5. Hunt's son-in-law, Richard Brodrepp, was related to the Trenchards (as were the Brownes of Frampton) and came from a notably godly family. His grandfather, also Richard, who had served as a parliamentary committeeman during the 1640s and left a notably pious will, 'was of a markedly erenical disposition, and does not seem to have attracted the odium which was lavished on his colleagues': TNA, PROB 11/273, fos 266v–267r [30 September 1656; proved 19 February 1657/8]; Henning, *House of Commons, 1660–1690*, i, 721. Among the

According to the printer of the expanded edition of Glanvill's *magnum opus* on witchcraft, published posthumously in 1681, Hunt's exertions in prosecuting the witchcraft cases of 1665 'met with great opposition and discouragements from some then in Authority' and no witch panic ensued. An edited version of his 'book of examinations' was nonetheless published in the same edition alongside a mass of new stories and evidences of 'matters of fact' gathered by Glanvill and his associate Henry More in the previous decade. Unfortunately, no modern, annotated edition of *Saducismus Triumphatus*, or analysis of its evolution from the earlier works on witchcraft published by Glanvill, exists. We have, therefore, only a sketchy sense of the process whereby information was collected, and little knowledge of who was involved in this process, and why. In my recent work on the miracle healer Valentine Greatrakes, I attempted to fill some of the gaps by focusing on the circle of admirers who signed testimonials on his behalf in 1666. Many of these men shared Greatrakes' deep interest in demonology as well as his eirenic vision of a broad-based Anglican Church. Some such as Robert Boyle and his brother the earl of Orrery were almost certainly responsible for securing the inclusion of those cases of Irish witchcraft and other preternatural occurrences that were published by Glanvill and More in 1681. Others, such as George Rust and Benjamin Whichcote, were part of that group of like-minded scholars loosely affiliated under the label of the Cambridge Platonists. They were not alone, however, in their support of Glanvill and More's psychic researches. A number of their colleagues in the restored Church, who shared their latitudinarian sympathies, were also eager to proffer support, most notably Edward Fowler (d. 1714) and Hezekiah Burton (1632–1681).

Fowler, above all others, embodies the figure of the moderate clergyman, who never renounced his commitment to latitudinarianism while retaining a lifelong passion for the collection of 'matters of fact' to prove the existence of spirits and demons. Closely connected to Henry More and John Worthington, Fowler spent his whole clerical career promoting close ties with the dissenting community and encouraging collaboration on a number of issues. Foremost among these was the occult. In 1696, for example, the London dissenter and physician Henry Sampson described Fowler as 'a great Collector of such storys & others of like importance to prove the Being of Spirits', which he passed on to the nonconformist minister John Howe (1630–1705). Twenty years earlier Howe had helped to initiate a correspondence between Glanvill and Robert Boyle in which the former outlined his plans to collect and publish 'some modern well attested relations of fact, to prove the existence of witches and apparitions'.¹³⁶ Unlike some of his colleagues in the

papers of the Brownes of Frampton, there survives a commonplace book that contains a long extract (or draft?) from Glanvill entitled 'A Discourse of Witchcraft': see DHC, D/SHE/5, 460–77. Jonathan Barry has noted the strength of nonconformist activity in the area of south Somerset affected by the witch trials of 1665, as well as commenting upon the extent to which witness descriptions of the witches' nocturnal gatherings might be viewed as inverted images of godly behaviour in the aftermath of the 'great ejection' of 1662: Barry, 'Robert Hunt', 41–2.

¹³⁶ Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist*, 139; BL, Add. MS 4460, fos 54r–v; Boyle, *Correspondence*, iv, 460; v, 37–8; ODNB, sub Howe, John.

Church, Fowler's enthusiasm for the pursuit of such knowledge never faltered. In 1696 he was responsible for publishing the civil war exploits of the Cornish maid Anne Jefferies who, like Greatrakes, was widely admired for her miraculous cures. And in the years immediately following, he fairly bombarded his friend and fellow latitudinarian John Sharp (d. 1714), archbishop of York, with tales of ghosts and similar stories. In 1699, for example, he was engaged in investigating claims of a haunting at the house of a nonconformist minister in Deptford, Kent, and two years later was undertaking similar research with regard to reports of a poltergeist in London.¹³⁷

The fact that so many of these incidents involved dissenters underscores the extent to which they were clearly envisaged by Fowler, as well as dissenting colleagues, as a way of channelling cooperation between moderates on both sides of the religious divide. Fowler's correspondence with Bishop Sharp contains, for example, a manuscript account, clearly intended for publication, of a case of witchcraft at Ashford in Kent that was written by a local dissenting minister, Thomas James.¹³⁸ But whereas Sharp's interest in such matters would appear to have waned, Fowler never ceased to articulate support for spirits and demons in what he perceived as an ongoing struggle with mockers and doubters. In 1712, for example, he struck up a close friendship with the Yorkshire antiquary Ralph Thoresby (1658–1725), whom he presented with a copy of John Beaumont's recently published work on witchcraft. Thoresby not only shared Fowler's passion for the occult, but he also demonstrated a deep-seated empathy for the plight of moderate nonconformists among whose ranks he had been reared and educated (he rejoined the Anglican fold in 1699).¹³⁹

¹³⁷ M. Pitt, *An Account of one Anne Jefferies . . . in a Letter from Moses Pitt to the Right Reverend Father in God Dr Edward Fowler, Lord Bishop of Gloucester* (London, 1696); GRO, D 354/6/2/4; Anon., *The Devil of Deptford* (London, 1699). For the identification of the owner of the haunted house at Deptford with the dissenting minister and physician Henry Godman (d. 1702), see Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist*, 140n. Among those who visited Deptford to witness the demonic activities were John Mapletoft (1631–1721), a former physician turned clergyman with distinctive latitudinarian leanings and associations: *ibid.*

¹³⁸ GRO, D 3549/6/2/4 [Thomas James, 'A Faithfull Narrative of the Strange Disturbances . . . in Ashford in Kent']. The case was the last witchcraft trial to be held at the Kent assizes where a not guilty verdict was returned before the sceptical judge Sir John Holt (1642–1710); Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, 264. James' motives for writing this account, which was clearly intended for publication, complement his earlier known published works. In 1694, for example, he published *Spira's Despair* (London, 1694) 'to stop the mouths of the atheistical scoffers and mockers' of the present age (frontispiece). James was engaged at this time in a prolonged dispute with local Baptists. As a minister in the town since about 1689, he was well placed to promote closer ties with the Anglican Church. Through his wife, Priscilla Fenner, he was related to several conformable clergymen, including Richard Warren (1681–1748), the son of Samuel Warren (d. 1721), vicar of Ashford.

¹³⁹ Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist*, 140–1; J. Hunter (ed.), *The Diary of Ralph Thoresby, F.R.S.*, 2 vols (London, 1830), ii, 102–3, 118–19 and *passim*. On the evidence of his diary, Thoresby was fully conversant with recent works published on witchcraft and demonology, conversed with others on the subject, and even went out of his way to visit a supposed witch in 1712. He believed that comets, plague, and strange lights presaged changes in the world, and even interviewed those who claimed to have been miraculously cured. Indeed, he spent much of the last years of his life collecting stories of apparitions 'in pursuance' of Bishop Fowler's request. Thoresby's interest in such matters, which included 'a collection of supernatural phenomena', sadly no longer extant, is discussed more fully in

Fowler's passion for research into spirits and other occult phenomena was also shared by 'that great Trimmer and Latitudinarian', Hezekiah Burton, whose widow he later married. Burton, like Fowler, was an indefatigable collector of ghost stories, and many of his letters on the subject later found their way into *Saducismus Triumphatus*. Like Glanvill and the Cambridge Platonists, he was an early supporter of the new science, assisting John Wilkins in his scientific and religious endeavours during his short stay at Cambridge in 1659–60. He was also on close personal terms with Henry More and was responsible for editing Richard Cumberland's *De Legibus Naturae* (1672) in which the latter sought to utilize the recent advances in natural philosophy against Hobbes and in support of a divinely ordained system of natural law. His latitudinarian sympathies are equally apparent throughout his own published writings, which did not appear until after his death in 1684. There, he bemoans those who use religion to persecute those 'that but differed from them in some trifling Opinions'. Typically, he stressed the role of reason in subjugating the passions, and, as a firm moralist, ascribed the growth of sin and division in society to a lack of charity. In common with others who shared his moderate religious outlook, he condemned atheism and irreligion alongside theism and 'mere mechanism' and advised others to study how the Devil maintained order and unity among his subjects as a guide to the maintenance of Christian unity and social and political order. In so doing, he echoed Glanvill's dictum that 'the Devil is a name for a Body Politick', a common refrain of demonologists and theologians of all stripes who routinely stressed the hierarchical and orderly 'disorder' of Satanic rule. According to his biographer Jon Parkin, the collected writings of Burton reflect his 'latitudinarian desire to emphasise the moral theology of a natural religion against what he saw as counterfeit and superficial modes of formal religious devotion' as well as exploring a typically latitudinarian preoccupation with the creation of an ethical language which might 'reconcile self-interest and moral duty'.¹⁴⁰

In addition to Fowler and Burton, Glanvill and More, in compiling *Saducismus Triumphatus*, drew on a multitude of clerical accomplices who clearly shared their ecclesiological vision of a unified Anglican Church that emphasized personal morality and 'rational religion' over doctrinal debate and theological squabbling. Typically, many shared a Cambridge background as part of a group of like-minded scholars and divines centred on More and his circle. William Owtram (1626–1679), for example, who acted as a middleman in acquiring testimonies

M. Hunter, 'The Decline of Magic: Challenge and Response in Early Enlightenment England', *Historical Journal*, 55 (2012), 409–16.

¹⁴⁰ Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, ii, 228–30, 231–5, 235–7, 245; J. Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of the Enlightenment: Science, Religion and Politics from the Restoration to the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1989), 42–3; M. H. Nicolson (ed.), *Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and Their Friends, 1642–1684*, rev. ed., S. Hutton (Oxford, 1992), 478–9; H. Burton, *Several Discourses* (London, 1684), 46, 70–81, 295, 315–16, 317; ODNB, sub Burton, Hezekiah. For earlier puritan attempts to invoke the Devil as an exemplary ruler, who governed hell according to the precepts of order and hierarchy, see above, 6 and n. I hope to return to this apparent anomaly—the Devil, after all, was traditionally seen as the master of misrule and architect of disorder in human affairs—in future publications.

relating to a haunting and an episode of witchcraft at Bow in east London, was a close friend and colleague of More at Christ's, who assisted in the publication of other works by the Cambridge Platonists. He was also, tellingly, admired by Richard Baxter, who considered him 'understanding, Conscionable & peaceable'.¹⁴¹ Others, like Anthony Horneck (1641–1697), who produced a translation of a recent series of witch trials in Sweden that were appended to the 1681 edition of *Saducismus Triumphatus*, were no doubt drawn to collaborate with Glanvill and More as part of what they perceived as a wider project of moderate reform within the Church of England. Horneck's career exemplifies much of what has already been said about the eirenic roots of demonological speculation in Restoration England. In the same year as the publication of the expanded edition of Glanvill's *Saducismus Triumphatus*, Horneck was seeking appointment as vicar in Plymouth, the birthplace of Joseph Glanvill. He failed to secure the vacancy, largely through the opposition of the inveterate hardliner, Thomas Lamplugh (1615–1691), bishop of Exeter, who, in a letter to the archbishop of Canterbury, claimed that Plymouth was a badly divided and factious town and that Horneck's appointment, greatly desired by the town's sizeable nonconformist population, would only exacerbate existing tensions there. Horneck was subsequently forced to eke out a living in London, where he served as unsalaried preacher to the Savoy and established a reputation as a pious moralist, scholar, and author. In the process, he worked closely alongside like-minded colleagues such as Edward Fowler, who in 1685 sought to persuade Horneck to publish an edition of his sermons with the nonconformist publisher John Dunton.¹⁴² He was also one of the founders of the movement to establish societies for the reformation of manners and shared the latitudinarian passion for the new science, becoming a fellow of the Royal Society in 1669. Horneck was particularly keen to promote a modified and more acceptable version of Cartesianism, one that sought to rescue spiritual interaction with bodies as an antidote to those 'who understand no more, but the matter, and motion of the Malmsbury Philosophy [of Thomas Hobbes]'. He too sustained an interest in

¹⁴¹ Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, ii, 259; Keeble and Nuttall (eds), *Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, ii, 105; Nicolson (ed.), *Conway Letters*, 294; ODNB, sub Owtram, William. Owtram's source was Dr Gibbs, 'a sober intelligent person'. Charles Gibbs (d. 1681), rector of Stanford Rivers in Essex and a prebend of St Peter's, Westminster, was not otherwise known for his credulity. In one of his published sermons, he supported the conventional view that all miracles had ceased and that Protestants in the present age were not like 'the barbarous Heathens [who were] awed by Oracles, the terrible Apparitions of Devils, Wizzards, and such Imps of Hell, as many of them are'. For Gibbs, only the minds of troubled consciences were burdened by the reports of ghosts and apparitions: C. Gibbs, *XXXI Sermons Preached to the Parishioners of Stanford-Rivers in Essex, upon Several Subjects and Occasions* (London, 1677), 135, 272, 368. For Gibbs, see ODNB.

¹⁴² Bodl., Rawlinson MS D 72, fos 127r–128r. Fowler's overtures were ultimately unsuccessful, despite the 'very great respect' that Horneck held for Dunton's father-in-law Samuel Annesley (1620–1696). The indefatigable Fowler was almost certainly seeking to use this project as yet another way to build bridges with the dissenting community in his parish of St Giles Cripplegate, where Annesley, the former vicar, then lived: M. Goldie and J. Spurr, 'Politics and the Restoration Parish: Edward Fowler and the Struggle for St Giles Cripplegate', *English Historical Review*, 109 (1994), 572–96.

the preternatural. In 1691, he was part of a 'Colledge of Theologists' engaged in the investigation of a woman living in Covent Garden who claimed to be possessed by the Devil.¹⁴³

Glanvill's work on witchcraft, as revised and enlarged by Henry More, provides a mass of evidence relating to the importance that a large section of moderate Anglicans drew from the collection of stories of spirits, demons, and witches. There is little doubt that further intensive study would discover yet more intriguing connections. It is highly probable, for example, that the story of an apparition at Marlborough in Wiltshire in 1674 provides further evidence of a shared interest and perhaps collaboration between local dissenters and moderate Anglicans in such matters. Glanvill's informant, Mr S, was almost certainly Joshua Sachaverell (d. 1684), the Low Church minister of the town. Sachaverell, like many moderate Anglicans who chose to conform at the Restoration, possessed potentially dangerous skeletons in his closet. Not only was he the son of an ejected minister, but he had also married the daughter of a regicide, Henry Smith (d. c.1668), who was himself the son-in-law of another regicide, Cornelius Holland (d. c.1671). Thomas Goddard, the chief witness to the haunting whose evidence before local magistrates was reproduced in *Saducismus*, was himself described as 'a constant frequenter of the Church' who had recently 'fell off wholly to the Non-Conformists'. To those, however, who might object that such apostasy discredited Goddard as a witness and one who wished to be 'accounted an Extraordinary somebody amongst the dissenting party', the editors of *Saducismus* retorted that 'though it may argue a vacillancy of his judgment, yet it does not [argue] any defect of his external senses'.¹⁴⁴ Further evidence that this particular case was providing an opportunity for moderates on both sides of the religious divide to rally round a common cause is suggested by the appearance in 1675 of a short pamphlet

¹⁴³ Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, ii, 311–28; Bodl., Tanner MS 36, fos 62, 72, 91; P. Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), 111; M. Hunter, *The Royal Society and Its Fellows, 1660–1700: The Morphology of an Early Scientific Institution*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1994), 186–7; A. Horneck, *The Great Law of Consideration: or a Discourse Wherein the Nature, Usefulness, and Absolute Necessity of Consideration in Order to a Truly Serious and Religious Life, is Laid Open* (London, 1677), A4r; R. J. Kerr and I. C. Duncan (eds), *The Portledge Papers* (London, 1928), 101–2. Much of the foregoing supplements the somewhat sketchy outline of Horneck's life and career in the *ODNB*. For further evidence of Horneck's Cartesianism, see the comment of John Beale, who proposed his name in 1671 as one who might be prevailed upon to translate Descartes into English in order to encourage the gentry to study geometry ' & shoue howe our language serves for Philosophicall disquisition': Oldenburg, *Correspondence*, viii, 122. His linkage of witchcraft and moral edification is also evident in his comment in a sermon preached on the highly charged political occasion of the regicide comparing men in their youth who put off the worship of God with witches, for 'to give our Youth and tender years to the Devil, is to say our Lesson, as they say, Witches do the Lords Prayer, backward': A. Horneck, *Gods Providence in the Midst of Confusions* (London, 1682), 51–2.

¹⁴⁴ Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, ii, 209–19; *Cal. Rev.*, 422; *ODNB*, sub Smith, Henry. Sacheverell's authorship of the letter to Glanvill, as first noted by Jonathan Barry, is confirmed in the 1716 edition of *The Drummer of Tedworth* (London, 1716). Barry goes on to speculate that the Sacheverells, father and son, 'were discussing and spreading ideas about such cases across the region' (as ejected curate of Wincanton, John Sacheverell was no doubt familiar with the outbreak of witchcraft in that neighbourhood investigated by Robert Hunt in 1665, above); Barry, *Witchcraft and Demonology in South-West England, 1640–1789*, 53.

account of the same events at Marlborough penned by the local Presbyterian blacksmith William Houlbrook.¹⁴⁵

Others cited as informants and correspondents in *Saducismus Triumphatus* include moderate clergymen such as John Scott and Andrew Paschall. Scott (d. 1695) was almost certainly the London minister named with others in the will of Hezekiah Burton. A staunch advocate of moral reform, he subsequently threw his weight behind the Tories.¹⁴⁶ The clerical career of Andrew Paschall (d. 1696) followed a similar path. A product of Cambridge in the 1650s, he fell under the spell of the Cambridge Platonists and became a convert to the cause of moral reform. His concern with rational religion led him to explore and promote the usefulness of a universal language, but like Scott he seems to have drifted away from latitudinarianism in the wake of the Exclusion Crisis.¹⁴⁷

‘THE DEVIL IS A NAME FOR A BODY POLITICK’: WITCHCRAFT, MODERATION, AND THE BOUNDARIES OF THE CONFESSIONAL STATE

As the preceding analysis suggests, it is possible to read Glanvill’s work on witchcraft as part of a wider project, or perhaps aspiration, within sections of the restored Church designed to widen and so redraw the boundaries of Anglican communion in England. As such, it was not alone. Other works on the theme of witchcraft and the preternatural, written by ecumenically minded conformists, include those by Henry Hallywell, Nathaniel Wanley, William Turner, and John Aubrey. Hallywell (1641–1703) was a protégé of George Rust, another of Glanvill and More’s collaborators, who published a spirited defence of witchcraft in the

¹⁴⁵ [W. Houlbrook], *The Deemon of Marleborough. Or More News from Wilt-shire. In a Most Exact Account of the Aparition of the Ghost, or Spirit of Edward Aven* (1675). Houlbrook was an educated blacksmith and Presbyterian sympathizer who was implicated in a royalist plot in Marlborough in 1659: W. Houlbrook, *A Black-Smith and No Jesuite: or a True Relation How I William Houlbrook Black-smith of Marleborough was Betray’d by Cornet George Joyce* (London, 1660).

¹⁴⁶ Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, ii, 260–2; *ODNB*, sub Scott, John. Scott was named, alongside Edward Fowler, Richard Cumberland, and other ministers, as a potential executor of the will of Hezekiah Burton in 1678: TNA, PROB 11/367, fos 249r–250r [24 January 1677/8; proved 14 September 1681].

¹⁴⁷ The *ODNB* entry for Paschall makes no mention of his interest in the occult and preternatural. In addition to the story of the haunting of his father’s house in Soper Lane, London, in 1661 (confirmed by Cudworth, Fowler, and Glanvill), Paschall was responsible for supplying John Aubrey with a detailed account of the demon of Spreyton in Devon. Paschall’s informant was a local minister, John Boyse, who alluded to the fact that the house where the apparition was seen was also the site of a conventicle, and that investigation of the phenomenon was being monopolized by a group of nonconformist ministers. An earlier published account of events at Spreyton emanated from the pen of the radical Whig Richard Bovet (above, 182): Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, ii, 281–92; Barry, ‘The Politics of *Pandaemonium*’, 193–5; Bodl., Aubrey MS 13, fo. 59; J. Aubrey, *Miscellanies* (London, 1696), 113–21. Paschall is best remembered today for his interest in schemes to create a universal language: see especially A. J. Turner, ‘Learning and Language in the Somerset Levels: Andrew Paschall of Chedsey’, in W. D. Hackman and A. J. Turner (eds), *Learning, Language and Invention: Papers Presented to Francis Maddison* (Aldershot, 1994), 297–308.

same year as the enlarged edition of *Saducismus Triumphatus*.¹⁴⁸ Wanley (d. 1680), too, was a product of interregnum Cambridge with close ties to both More and Baxter. Appointed vicar of Holy Trinity, Coventry, in 1662, he remained on close personal terms with his Presbyterian predecessor John Bryan (d. 1676), whose funeral sermon he preached. In 1676, he produced an 'exhaustive and carefully documented compendium of human prodigies' along Baconian lines that prefigured the similar but much larger work of his Anglican colleague William Turner (1653–1701) in 1697.¹⁴⁹ Turner was widely admired in dissenting circles and drew heavily on nonconformist sources in compiling his providential history. He was especially indebted to his close friend and 'peace maker' Philip Henry (1631–1696), in whose nonconformist household he had resided in the 1660s when he served as tutor to Henry's two sons. It is also worth noting that his *Compleat History of...Providences* was dedicated to John Williams (d. 1709), bishop of Chichester, a pro-exclusionist Whig and Boyle Lecturer, who favoured religious comprehension.¹⁵⁰ A year before Turner published his *magnum opus*, the antiquarian scholar John Aubrey (1626–1697) published a much slimmer volume of prodigious and preternatural occurrences. He, too, fits the profile of the latitudinarian demonologist. According to his biographer, Michael Hunter, Aubrey was a typical eirenecist, averse to sects and parties in religion and politics and a proponent of natural religion and rational fideism.¹⁵¹

Evidence linking latitudinarian strains of thought within the restored Church with a wider campaign designed to promote belief in spirits and witches is also traceable in a number of shorter pamphlets describing individual cases or incidents. In 1676, for example, the moderate vicar of Camberwell in Surrey, Richard Parr (d. 1691), played a prominent role in publicizing the case of the miraculous recovery of one of his parishioners, Francis Pulham (d. 1686), who suffered from a range of preternatural ailments bordering on madness.¹⁵² Parr had a long-standing interest in

¹⁴⁸ H. Hallywell, *Melampronoë: Or a Discourse of the Polity and Kingdom of Darkness. Together with a Solution of the Chiefest Objections Brought Against the Being of Witches* (London, 1681). For Hallywell, see Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist*, 138n and M. A. Lewis, 'Pastoral Platonism in the Writings of Henry Hallywell (1641–1703)', *Seventeenth Century*, 28 (2013), 441–63. In September 1684, Hallywell apologized for a delay in writing to More on account of his 'dayly Expectation of a further Account of the story of the Apparition': Christ's College Cambridge, MS 21, no. 35 [Hallywell to More, 4 September 1684].

¹⁴⁹ N. Wanley, *The Wonders of the Little World, or, A General History of Man* (London, 1678). A wide-ranging work, Wanley has a short section on witchcraft that is derived exclusively from published, European sources: *ibid.*, 515–18. Like many of his former Cambridge-educated clerical colleagues, he read widely in contemporary medical literature, citing a range of 'moderns', including the celebrated anatomist Walter Needham (see note 89, this chapter), and his description of a child crying in the womb: *ibid.*, 2. For Wanley, see *ODNB*; TNA, PROB 11/367, fo. 63r [15 September 1680; proved 20 June 1681].

¹⁵⁰ W. Turner, *A Compleat History of the Most Remarkable Providences, Both of Judgment and Mercy, Which Have Hapned in This Present Age* (London, 1697). For Turner, see Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist*, 178n.

¹⁵¹ *ODNB*, sub Aubrey, John. The entry is largely a distilled version of M. Hunter, *John Aubrey and the Realm of Learning* (New York, 1975), 56–60.

¹⁵² Anon., *The Miraculous Recovery of a Dumb Man at Lambeth: Or, A Brief and True Relation of an Extraordinary Distemper which... Seized upon Mr. Francis Culham... With His Wonderful Restauration on Fryday the 12 May 1676, by the Immediate Hand of God* (London, 1676); *ODNB*, sub Parr, Richard.

such matters. In 1660, he published a short treatise advocating godly reform in which he expatiated on the perils of witchcraft, sorcery, and judicial astrology, whose exponents, he claimed, 'were no better then those poor wretches of some parts of the world that worship the Devil'.¹⁵³ Others to publicize extraordinary instances of divine providence include Simon Ford (d. 1699) and James Illingworth, who in 1678 collaborated in publishing details of the case of a Staffordshire sinner whose body mysteriously rotted. Both Ford and Illingworth, like Parr, had served as clergymen in the 1650s and conformed at the Restoration. Ford was a former puritan and noted moderate, being accounted by Baxter as 'among the best and ablest of the conforming ministers'. His confederate Illingworth, who played a leading role in the establishment of a voluntary Presbyterian association in Cambridgeshire in 1657–58, was ejected from his fellowship at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, but later conformed.¹⁵⁴

There is little doubt that the vast majority of those who wrote in this vein did so primarily with the aim of discrediting atheists and unbelievers. Belief in spirits and witches enabled Protestants of differing doctrinal positions to come together and rally round a set of indisputable Christian truths that might be readily proven as 'matters of fact'. The Suffolk minister Cave Beck (1622–1706), who supplied Henry Oldenburg and the Royal Society with various stories of ghosts and witches in the late 1660s, specifically intended that they should be used 'against ye Vitiosi of ye Sadduces Invasions'. A moderate churchman with strong links to East Anglian puritanism (he was introduced to Oldenburg by the dissenting minister Nathaniel Fairfax), Beck clearly utilized his former connections among the godly in order to forward his interests in the preternatural.¹⁵⁵ Interest in the new science, as we have

The grateful patient, Culham, a local surgeon, remembered Parr in his will in 1686: TNA, PROB 11/382, fos 15r–v [7 January 1685/6; proved 25 January 1685/6]. The account was also included by Turner in his voluminous collection published in 1697: Turner, *Compleat History*, i, 110–11. For Parr's moderation to all except the Quakers, see Anon., *A Brief Narrative of the Proceedings of Doctor Parr . . . Against Certain People called Quakers* (1677), 17. He is probably the Mr Parr of the diocese of Winchester who was criticized in 1683 for acting like a nonconformist, not wearing the surplice, and turning his church into a conventicle: Bodl., Tanner MS 34, fos 142–3.

¹⁵³ R. Parr, *Christian Reformation: Being an Earnest Perswasion to the Speedy Practise of It* (London, 1660), 93 [92–5]. A concern with such issues was also a major preoccupation of many puritan commentators, both before and after 1660. Richard Baxter's friend Edward Lawrence (c.1628–1695), for example, included a large section on the sinfulness of white witchcraft in a larger work designed to promote the 'healing' character of post-Restoration Dissent: E. Lawrence, *Christ's Power over Bodily Diseases* (London, 1672), 108–18. For Lawrence, see *Cal. Rev.*, 318.

¹⁵⁴ Illingworth's *A Just Narrative, or, Account of the Man whose Hands and Leg Rotted Off in . . . Kings-Swinford, in Staffordshire* (London, 1678) was simultaneously published as an appendix to S. Ford, *A Discourse Concerning God's Judgments* (London, 1678). For Ford, who became rector of Old Swinford in 1676, see *ODNB*. For Illingworth, see *Cal. Rev.*, 287–8; J. Twigg, *The University of Cambridge and the English Revolution, 1625–1688* (Woodbridge, 1990), 189–90. Among the articles drawn up by the Cambridgeshire association are those relating to the punishment of men or women who use witchcraft or go to witches: H. W. P. Stevens, 'An Ecclesiastical Experiment in Cambridgeshire, 1656–1658', *English Historical Review*, 10 (1895), 749.

¹⁵⁵ Oldenburg, *Correspondence*, iv, 125–6, 337; v, 14–16. Among those cases cited by Beck was that of the bewitchment of the nonconformist Thomas Spatchet, for whom see above, 189. For Beck, like Andrew Paschall (see note 147, this chapter) a devotee of universal language schemes, see the article in the *ODNB* by John Blatchly.

seen, formed an integral element of the latitudinarian position on spirits and witchcraft. Revealed religion, alongside natural theology, provided a mass of evidence, or 'matters of fact', which might be used to negate atheism and encourage the virtues of piety and obedience in what was otherwise an imperfect body politic. Occasionally, such ideas found their way into sermons and then into print. William Payne (d. 1697), for example, another broad-church moderate who became a fellow of the Royal Society in 1681, echoed the views of his colleague Anthony Horneck when he expatiated before a group of young scholars in 1682 on the merits of the new mechanical philosophy in opposition to the followers of Hobbes who 'can conceive nothing but matter and motion'. In what was otherwise a notable paean to the beauty and order of the natural world, in which the students were encouraged to adopt the methods of chemists and mathematicians in order to understand the 'wonderful Mechanism of every part and Member' of both man and nature, Payne offered natural philosophy as a corrective to those who rejected all religion. If only the latter had 'a little more Learning and sense', Payne opined that:

'tis as easie to understand spirit as matter, and that there are nigh as many difficulties in the most ordinary *Phaenomena* of Nature, as in the Mysteries of Religion, and that he can as little give a full Account of the most obvious things . . . as how Spirits think, and move, and converse without a Body . . . and 'tis as easie to conceive an Infinite God, as infinite Matter and Space, and how he is present in all places and yet has no parts, as how Matter is made either of Divisibles or indivisibles.¹⁵⁶

For moderate clerics like Payne, the new science thus offered plentiful proof of the reality of spirits. Faith in the virtues of new currents in natural philosophy also permeated the ranks of the magistracy and other professions such as medicine. Sir Matthew Hale (1609–1676), for example, combined an avid interest in experimental science with a deep-seated belief in spirits and witches. At the same time, Hale, who first came to prominence as a 'godly' judge in the 1650s, shared the latitudinarian aims of moderates on both sides of the Restoration religious divide, including Richard Baxter and John Tillotson. Critically, Hale, who contemplated 'a great design against atheism', saw a crucial link between the spread of such ideas and the growth of confessional strife. As a result, he adopted a remarkably moderate approach, both in theory and practice, towards Dissent, arguing that conduct rather than dogma should form the core of a godly church settlement. According to his close friend Baxter, Hale devoted much of his time while on circuit writing on such themes, producing in the process at least four volumes devoted to an attack on 'Atheism, Sadducism and Infidelity, to prove first the Deity and then the Immortality of Man's Soul'.¹⁵⁷ Hale, perhaps, is most known today for his active role in

¹⁵⁶ W. Payne, *Learning and Knowledge Recommended to the Scholars of Brentwood School in Essex in a Sermon* (London, 1682), 2, 19–29, 24–5. Payne was proposed as a fellow of the Royal Society by the eminent anatomist Edward Tyson (1651–1708), who was himself the son of a former Cromwellian and puritan: Hunter, *Royal Society and Its Fellows*, 206–7. For Payne's latitudinarian leanings and support for the Comprehension Bill in 1689, see ODNB.

¹⁵⁷ For Hale, see especially ODNB and A. Cromartie, *Sir Matthew Hale, 1609–1676: Law, Religion and Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1995); B. Worden, 'Toleration and the Cromwellian Protectorate',

overseeing the trial and execution of the Lowestoft witches at Bury St Edmunds in 1662. To what extent Hale's judgement in this case was shaped by the fact that the victims were the daughters of a prominent and wealthy nonconformist, Samuel Pacey, is difficult to determine. There seems little doubt, however, that the guilty verdict passed down by the jury, and confirmed by Hale, was underwritten by the evidence of the celebrated physician Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682), whose pronounced religious moderation and passion for the new science mirrored that of Hale.¹⁵⁸ Natural or revealed religion, an important component of much of the new science, thus underpinned the war against Sadducism rather than, as some have inferred, promoting unbelief.

Samuel Rolls (d. 1679 or 1680), who considered himself as 'a kind of martyr in the behalf of Moderation', went one stage further by viewing atheism and debauchery, like witchcraft, as a product of the same fruit. According to Rolls, in a work ostensibly concerned with the rebuilding of London in the aftermath of the Great Fire, it was discontent and melancholy that led men and women into atheism and debauchery, and finally to seek witches, 'the worst of all creatures . . . and farthest from Religion of any sort'. The solution, of course, lay in a plea for religious peace and harmony, a theme that dominates the rest of Rolls' work in which he consistently alludes to the merits of a Church predicated on latitudinarian principles.¹⁵⁹ In many respects, Rolls' career exemplifies many of the themes of this chapter. An ejected clergyman and 'after conformist', Rolls' reaction to the Restoration was highly ambiguous, to say the least. Inclined to Presbyterianism, he later claimed that his ambivalent attitude towards conformity arose in part because of the deep-seated antipathy of his wife to any such course of action. According to Rolls, she even attributed her illnesses and those of her children to God's anger at her husband's dalliance with conformity. Like many of his colleagues faced with a similar dilemma, Rolls turned to the practice of medicine. In so doing, he was well placed to minister to the variety of ailments that plagued the dissenting community including the 'melancholy that led men and women . . . to seek devils and witches'.

in W. J. Sheils (ed.), *Persecution and Toleration* (Oxford, 1984), 231–3; Sylvester (ed.), *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, iii, 34, 47. For Hale's remarkable religious moderation, which unusually extended to the Quakers, and the wide esteem in which he was held by both moderates and nonconformists, see, for example, J. Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers . . . from 1650, to . . . 1689*, 2 vols (London, 1753), i, 261–3; S. Blackerby, *Sermons Preached on Several Occasions* (London, 1674), epistle dedicatory; R. Porter, *The Life of Mr John Hieron* (London, 1691), 88–9.

¹⁵⁸ For an admirable attempt to square Browne's belief in witchcraft with his interest in the new science, see K. Killeen, *Biblical Scholarship, Science and Politics in Early Modern England: Thomas Browne and the Thorny Place of Knowledge* (Farnham, 2009), 109–54. Unfortunately, Killeen's discussion excludes discussion of the wider religio-political framework in which these debates took place.

¹⁵⁹ S. Rolls, *London's Resurrection or the Rebuilding of London Encouraged, Directed, and Improved, in Fifty Discourses* (London, 1668), 163. Rolls repeatedly invoked the language of 'latitude' and moderation in this work, even applying it to the rebuilding of the city itself, and a plea for the widening of the capital's 'latitudinarian streets'. He nonetheless rejected the tag that some placed upon him, who 'think I am a Latitudinarian in a vulgar sense of the word', and thus in favour of religious toleration: *ibid.*, 33, 58, 98–121. For Rolls' ambivalent stance on conformity and his chequered career after 1660, see *Cal. Rev.*, 415–16.

We have no knowledge as to the source and nature of Rolls' medical training. However, the vast majority of his former puritan colleagues who took up the practice of medicine after the Restoration, often in combination with pastoral duties among their former flocks, were typically trained in the advanced medical schools of the United Provinces, where they were exposed to the latest advances in medical thinking. On their return to England, there is little doubt that this new breed of 'spiritual physicians' put their knowledge to good use, tending to both the physical and mental complaints of their co-religionists, which, as I have argued elsewhere, were often envisaged as interconnected and indivisible. Not surprisingly, belief in spirits, bewitchment, and possession retained a powerful appeal for such men and may even have been strengthened by the experience of many in the universities of Holland, where they would have undoubtedly encountered the radical scepticism of Spinoza and his supporters.¹⁶⁰

Critically, however, the dissenters were not alone, leastwise in the early years of the Restoration, in defending the existence of spirits and the reality of witchcraft. Allies within the restored Church, many former colleagues in the 1650s, were keen to both defend and publicize such phenomena, ostensibly as a bulwark against the threat of a creeping atheism and moral debauchery, but also as a way of promoting bridge-building with the voice of moderate Dissent. Under the pressure of events, culminating in the revival of major political and religious unrest sparked by the Exclusion Crisis, many former latitudinarians within the Anglican fold undoubtedly recanted such views. The emergence of the first recognizable political 'parties' once again threatened to tip the country over the edge and into civil war, initiating in the process a revival of an extremist rhetoric in which the figure of the witch as rebel once again figured prominently. While the Whigs and their dissenting supporters were not averse from indulging in such word games, the Tories and their High Church allies were the masters of such discourse, creating in the process a radical new understanding of what it meant to talk of witches and demons in a fractured and permanently divided body politic. The upshot, as I seek to show in Chapter 6, marked a critical stage in the 'disenchantment of the world', a process that was rooted in the growing divisions within English political culture and which ultimately would lead to the emergence of a new kind of polity, pluralistic and tolerant of difference, in which belief in spirits and witches was no longer mandatory.

¹⁶⁰ I discuss these issues more fully in P. Elmer, 'Medicine, Witchcraft and the Politics of Healing in Late-Seventeenth-Century England', in Grell and Cunningham (eds), *Medicine and Religion in Enlightenment Europe*, 223–41.

6

‘Rebellion is as the sin of Witchcraft’ Anglicanism, the State, and the Decline of Witchcraft in Restoration England

A Witch is a rebel in Physicks; and a Rebell is a Witch in Politicks: The one acts against Nature. The other against Order, the Rule of it: but both are in League with the Divell as the first father of Discord and Sorcerie

[Thomas Vaughan], *Anthroposophia
Theomagica* (London, 1650), 31–2

INTRODUCTION

The Restoration of the Stuarts in 1660, as we saw in the previous chapter, was accompanied by a heightened awareness of the presence of the Devil and the activity of his servants, witches, in a world that most continued to perceive as governed by the hand of a vengeful and providential God. For a brief period, the majority of Charles II’s subjects also continued to pin their faith in the idea of a return to religious and political unity in the restored body politic that would heal the divisions of the previous two decades. In the event, such aspirations proved unfounded, the demise of the unitary state being accompanied by a growing disinterest in, and rejection of, a range of providential beliefs including witchcraft and related phenomena. Were the two developments connected? In Chapter 5 I tried to show how those Anglicans most committed to preserving the idea of a unitary, eirenic, and harmonious body politic in the wake of the Restoration spent a great deal of energy in defending the belief in witchcraft. This, I argue, they did as part of a coherent and rational strategy designed to create common ground with the vast majority of their former puritan colleagues and neighbours, and so lay the foundations for a new Church of England predicated on moral rather than doctrinal consensus. The subsequent failure of the latitudinarians to achieve their goal should not obscure their achievements, including the close links forged by many individual latitude-men with those on the other side of the religious divide inaugurated by the religious settlement of the 1660s. It is nonetheless true that the vast majority of their colleagues in the restored Anglican Church, both lay and clerical, grew increasingly weary of attempts to promote accommodation and

reconciliation, a process that gathered momentum in the wake of the Exclusion Crisis (1679–82) and which led many to conclude that the English body politic had become fractured beyond repair. Religious nonconformists and political dissidents, who before 1679 had been subject to sporadic bouts of legal and quasi-judicial persecution, were now liable to the full rigour of the state's judicial apparatus. They were also the object of vitriolic condemnation from the pulpit and in the state-controlled press. Critically for this study, the growing antipathy felt by the defenders of the religious and political status quo towards the enemies of the restored Church and state was increasingly expressed through recourse to the language of a resurgent demonology, albeit one that now focused almost exclusively upon a form of rhetoric that sought to equate all forms of religious and political dissent with witchcraft. At the same time, large numbers of mainstream, loyal Anglicans began to reject a range of providentialist beliefs, including witchcraft and related phenomena, and to focus instead upon the threat posed to political stability by religious 'enthusiasts' and their political allies, the Whigs, whom they routinely castigated as surrogate witches.

This process of intellectual reorientation, which was linked to the growth of linguistic instability and dissonance in the wider body politic, is perhaps most evident in the vast number of sermons preached after 1660 by loyal clergymen on the theme of the sinfulness of religious apostasy and political rebellion. In what follows, I cite extensively from such sources, which like those of the 1640s speak eloquently of the deep-seated anxieties felt by many conformable Anglicans towards those witch-like dissidents whose plotting endangered the safety of Church and state. In the process, I suggest that the renewed focus upon the rebel as witch—a familiar trope of royalist writing from the 1640s—radically transformed the way many in elite circles, both in the Church and judiciary, thought about the nature of witchcraft and the dangers which it posed to social order. Witchcraft was not so much argued out of existence in the period after 1660, but rather was redefined, or reconstituted, in such a way as to undermine the traditional fears surrounding witches. It was no coincidence, I suggest, that prosecutions for witchcraft as a crime, either in the secular or ecclesiastical courts, dwindled to a trickle at precisely the same time as the legal apparatus of the state was being directed towards those 'witches' who plotted the downfall of the restored Church and state. In the meantime, belief in the reality of the maleficent witch was largely confined to those on the margins of the state, religious and political dissenters (often one and the same) whose continued belief in a range of preternatural and providentialist events provided comfort in the face of both formal and informal persecution.

The decline of witchcraft in England, both in terms of belief and trials, was therefore an essential by-product of the growing politicization of the country and eventual collapse of the unitary state in the wake of the civil wars. This is not to argue that other developments—most notably the onset of the Scientific Revolution—did not play a part in this process. As we shall see, many Anglicans found sustenance and support for their scepticism from their immersion in, and

acceptance of, many of the new currents of natural philosophical thinking current in the second half of the seventeenth century. This is evident, for example, in the attractiveness of many of the mechanistic assumptions that underpinned the thought of René Descartes (1596–1650) and Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) despite the moral dangers associated with such men and their philosophies. At the same time, it is equally clear that many sceptics were highly eclectic in their scientific thinking, favouring no individual natural philosopher or related body of ideas. Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 5, many of those who most actively defended the reality of witchcraft were equally keen devotees of the ‘new science’. The Scientific Revolution alone cannot therefore have provided the prime agency of change in regard to the decline of witchcraft. It did, however, provide much-needed ammunition for the arguments of those who were disposed, through religious and political affiliation, to either accept or reject witchcraft.

This is perhaps most evident in relation to one aspect of the Scientific Revolution which, in terms of the witchcraft debate, has not received as much attention as it ought. Medicine and medical practitioners, particularly those favourable to Dissent, as I suggest in Chapter 5, provided a great deal of intellectual and practical support for those eager to prove the existence of spirits and witches. Not surprisingly, perhaps, their conformist colleagues in medical circles took the opposite approach, providing a wide range of evidence to disprove belief in witchcraft. In doing so, as I show below, they were increasingly indebted to new strains of medical thinking in England, particularly those related to the pioneering research in the field of neurology conducted by the Anglican anatomist Thomas Willis (1621–1675). By the end of the seventeenth century, it was becoming commonplace in Anglican circles to explain the bizarre contortions of those who claimed to suffer from bewitchment or diabolical possession as a form of neurological dysfunction. Such people were now widely perceived to be suffering from some form of mental disorder, in much the same way as earlier generations of physicians had diagnosed melancholia in order to explain the unnatural behaviour of witches and their victims. Crucially, similar arguments were invoked to account for the actions and beliefs of those ‘enthusiasts’ who opted to reject communion with their Anglican neighbours. The pathologizing of dissent, and the depiction of religious enthusiasts as mad, thus proceeded hand in hand with a general approach in mainstream Anglican circles that sought to minimize the role of spirit in day-to-day human affairs. Science and medicine thus operated as the handmaiden to change, but only as far as it was subservient to the overarching demands of particular religious and political groups and factions within a divided body politic.¹

¹ For an overview of the historiography of science and medicine as it affected attitudes to witchcraft, see P. Elmer, ‘Science, Medicine and Witchcraft’, in J. Barry and O. Davies (eds), *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography* (Basingstoke, 2007), 33–51; P. Elmer, ‘Science and Witchcraft’ and ‘Medicine and Witchcraft’, in B. Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford, 2013), 548–60, 561–74.

REFRAMING THE DEBATE ABOUT WITCHCRAFT
IN ANGLICAN CIRCLES

While a small but vociferous minority of Anglicans sought to promote the reality of witchcraft after 1660, primarily as a check against what they saw as rampant Sadducism bordering on outright atheism, most of their colleagues within the restored Church, including its leaders, barely touched upon the subject. When they did speak of such matters, they did so almost exclusively in order to stigmatize their religious adversaries as servants of the Devil. In countless sermons, Anglican ministers repeatedly invoked the language of classical demonology as a weapon in a bitter war of words in which they sought to redefine witchcraft as a form of spiritual apostasy and political subversion. This was not a new process. As we have seen, it first featured prominently in Anglican circles in the early years of the civil war, when loyal ministers and lay colleagues resorted to such language in an attempt to sway the hearts and minds of subjects. Thereafter, it remained a popular trope of much royalist writing throughout the interregnum, acquiring a new lease of life after 1660, when all forms of opposition to the restored regime were routinely, and often very publicly, depicted in demonological terms. Under the circumstances, it is little surprise to find that the decline of trials of actual witches after 1660 occurred at the same time that the focus of the authorities in Church and state was increasingly projected upon a far more visible enemy of the state, the nonconformist, whose legal existence was enshrined in a series of punitive acts known collectively as the Clarendon Code (1661–65).

It is impossible to exaggerate the extent to which loyal Anglican ministers incorporated the demonizing of dissent into the daily practice of their pastoral duties after 1660. This is most evident in the sermons that ministers preached to their congregations in which parishioners were regularly warned of the dangers of sedition by recourse to demonological examples. While few biblical references were overlooked, there is little doubt that the key text in this polemical debate between the forces of conformity and dissent was that which portrayed rebellion as analogous to witchcraft: 'For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry' [1 Samuel 15:23]. In sermon after sermon, Anglican clergymen repeatedly insinuated that sedition was a species of witchcraft and now constituted the heart of that crime, which had formerly been interpreted as an individual act of evildoing in the shape of *maleficium*. Typical of the genre was that preached by Thomas Marriott in Stepney in January 1661 in response to the recent Fifth Monarchist uprising. Aware of the volatile passions engendered in this populous and radical parish, Marriott went to great pains to draw out the close parallels between witchcraft and rebellion. Rebels and witches shared a range of characteristics. They acted unnaturally, against the divine order of nature, were contemptuous of authority, and threatened, like the plague, to infect others with their evil. Marriott went on to inform his audience that the origins, actions, and fate of rebels were essentially the same as witches, who act out of malice and hatred and seldom repent of their actions.² It was a tour de force,

² T. Marriott, *Rebellion Unmasked or a Sermon Preached at Poplar in the Parish of Stepney . . . Wherein is Opened the Resemblances between Rebellion and the Sins of Witchcraft and Idolatry* [13 January 1661]

echoed and repeated in pulpits up and down the country for much of the remainder of the century. Critically, many sermons were delivered at specific times and places where the political resonance and impact of such an association linking sedition with witchcraft was unmistakable. One such occasion was provided by the assize sermon, preached before a gathering of local political elites and royal judges on circuit prior to the dispensation of justice at the county assizes.³ The impact of such preaching on grand jurors and local magistrates can only have assisted the temptation to view those who came before them accused of acts of political disobedience or religious dissent (or indeed both, as they became conflated in the minds of many loyalists) as surrogate witches. Other set-piece occasions offered further valuable opportunities for loyal preachers to expound on the theme of rebellion as a form of witchcraft. Various dates in a calendar that was itself becoming highly politicized by the restored regime and its critics after 1660 provided an opportunity for ministers to remind their congregations of the witch-like behaviour of those who had either murdered an anointed monarch (30 January) or now conspired to repeat the act (9 September 1683 and 26 July 1685).⁴ The anniversary of the regicide in particular proved an irresistible opportunity for loyalist preachers to expatiate on the 'witchcraft of rebellion'.⁵ On 30 January,

(London, 1661), esp. 8–15. Marriott was at pains to point out that the sermon as printed replicated exactly the oral version 'both for sence and words': *ibid.*, A2v.

³ For assize sermons invoking 1 Samuel 15:23, see T. Bradley, *Nosce Te Ipsum* [York, Lent, 1668] (York, 1668), 30–1; J. Byrom, *The Necessity of Subjection* [Salisbury, 17 July 1681] (London, 1681), 16; R. Forster, *Prerogative and Privilege Represented* [Rochester, 1684] (London, 1684), 2; J. Kimberley, *Of Obedience for Conscience-Sake* [Warwick, 7 August 1683] (London, 1683), unpaginated epistle dedicatory; J. Knight, *The Samaritan Rebels Perjur'd by a Covenant of Association* [Northampton, 30 March 1682] (London, 1682), 19, 22–3, 28–9; W. Smith, *Two Sermons Preached at Two Publick Assizes for the County of Suffolk* (London, 1674), ii [Bury St Edmunds, 13 September 1673], 54; W. Stainforth, *An Assize Sermon* [York, 3 August 1685] (York, 1685), 26; J. Standish, *A Sermon Preached at the Assizes at Hertford* [9 March 1683] (London, 1683), 25; J. Vesey, *A Sermon Preached at Clonmell at the Assizes* [16 September 1683] (Dublin, 1683), 12–13. Diehard Anglican magistrates were not averse to hammering home the same message in charges which they gave to grand juries before the meetings of the quarter sessions: see, for example, P. Whalley, *The Civil Rights, and Conveniences of Episcopacy with the Inconvenience of Presbytery Asserted; as it was Delivered in a Charge to the Grand Jury* [Nottingham, 22 April 1661] (London, 1661), 6.

⁴ 9 September 1683 was celebrated as a day of thanksgiving following the discovery of the Rye House Plot. For examples of sermons preached on this day referencing 1 Samuel 15:23, see J. Chapman, *A Sermon Preached September 9th 1683* (London, 1684); H. Hesketh, *A Sermon Preached Before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London* [St Mary le Bow] (London, 1684), 27–8; T. Long, *King David's Danger and Deliverance: Or, The Conspiracy of Absolon and Achitophel Defeated* [Exeter] (London, 1683), 10; C. Powell, *The Religious Rebel* [South Marston] (London, 1683), 1, 13, 20–1. 26 July 1685 was set aside as a day of special thanksgiving following the defeat of Monmouth's rebellion. For examples of sermons alluding to witchcraft preached on this day, see T. Heyrick, *The Character of a Rebel* [Market Harborough] (London, 1685), 6, 20; C. Hutton, *The Rebels Text Opened, and their Solemn Appeal Answered. Being a Sermon Preach'd in the Parish Church of Up-Lime, on the Thanksgiving Day* (London, 1686), A3r; T. Long, *The Unreasonableness of Rebellion* [Exeter] (London, 1685), frontispiece and 1; J. Williams, *A Sermon Preached July 16. 1685* (London, 1685), 13. Hutton claimed to have preached frequently to his congregation at Uplyme, Devon, on these themes, 'and earnestly beseech'd you with abundance of arguments, and vehemence of speech, to take heed of Rebellion, which is as the sin of Witchcraft': Hutton, *Rebels Text*, 14.

⁵ For examples, see T. Cartwright, *A Sermon Preached* (Edinburgh and London, 1682), 18; J. Ellesby, *The Doctrine of Passive Obedience: Asserted in a Sermon Preach'd on January 30 1684* (London, 1685), 14; E. Lake, *A Sermon Preached... on the Thirtieth of January MDCLXXXIII* (London, 1684), 29; H. Maurice, *A Sermon Preached before the King at White-Hall* [30 January

audiences across the country were repeatedly reminded of the diabolical nature of that dire event. John King used this occasion in 1661 to inform his Irish audience that the puritan was 'the chief Witch of these times'. In the same year, Edward Stanley (d. 1662) went so far as to tar all Cromwellian collaborators, not just the regicides, with the brush of complicity in the martyrdom of Charles I, claiming that those who had no direct role in the crime were as guilty as those who signed the death warrant. He went on to compare them to witches, who 'can kill a man and never come near him' by sticking pins into effigies.⁶ Loyalists also utilized commemorative sermons of this kind to cite other demonological references in the Bible designed to justify the sanctity of monarchy and the merits of passive obedience.⁷ In addition, the anniversary of the Restoration itself, dated from the entry of Charles II to London on his birthday (29 May), and that of the coronation (23 April 1661) provided equally poignant occasions for Anglican preachers to warn parishioners of the perils of demonically inspired acts of sedition.⁸

A number of interesting and significant themes arise from close study of the demonological language found in Restoration sermons, especially those preached on sensitive political occasions as suggested above. In the first place, it is clear that many were designed to depict religious dissent as a form of collective spiritual apostasy that was analogous to that rejection of God undertaken by witches. Many of these themes had been aired during the civil war but were now given renewed vitality due to the desire of those in authority to restore unity in the Church by a combination of persuasion and persecution. A particular target of the loyalist preachers was what they perceived as the excessive emphasis of puritan and dissenting ministers upon the role of the written and spoken word (as opposed to ritual) in pastoral matters. The puritan predilection for sermons was little other than an excuse for seditious sorcerers to bewitch the people into rebellion. The people, according to William Assheton (1642–1711), 'could never be brought to rebel, till their Preachers had first bewitched them'.⁹ Moreover, their seditious

1682] (London, 1682), 35; L. Milbourne, *The Originals of Rebellion: or, the Ends of Separation* [Great Yarmouth] (London, 1683), 37–8; T. S., *Δεσμός Βασιλῶς. A Sermon Preached in the Kings Prison the Fleet* [30 January 1682] (London, 1682), 49; B. Woodroffe, *A Sermon Preached January XXX 1684/5* (London, 1685), 33–5.

⁶ J. King, *A Sermon on the 30th of January* (London, 1661), 69; E. Stanley, *Three Sermons Preached in the Cathedral Church of Winchester* (London, 1662), ii [30 January 1661], 106, 108–9. Stanley was so sickened by the memory of the regicide that he wished to see 30 January 1649 expunged from the calendar: *ibid.*, i [19 August 1660], 23. For his staunch devotion to the royal cause, see *Wal. Rev.*, 190.

⁷ For the case of Saul and the visit to the witch of Endor, see, for example, E. Pelling, *David and the Amalekite upon the Death of Saul* [30 January 1683] (London, 1683), 8; E. Pelling, *A Sermon Preacht on January 30th 1683. In Westminster-Abby* (London, 1684), 34; Powell, *Religious Rebel*, 20–1.

⁸ For the King's birthday and witchcraft, see H. Anderson, *A Sermon Preached in the Cathedral Church at Winchester* [29 May 1681] (London, 1681), 30; T. Long, *A Sermon against Murmuring* [Exeter, 29 May 1680] (London, 1680), 18, 22. For coronation day sermons declaiming on demonological themes, see, for example, J. Winter, *A Sermon Preached* [East Dereham] (London, 1662), 31.

⁹ W. Assheton, *Evangelium Armatum. A Specimen; or Short Collection of Several Doctrines and Positions Destructive to our Government both Civil and Ecclesiastical* (London, 1663; revised ed., 1682), A4r. For further examples linking witchcraft, conjuration, rebellion, and puritanical preaching, see W. Assheton, *The Danger of Hypocrisy. A Sermon Preached at Guild-Hall Chappel* [3 August 1673]

books and pamphlets were routinely characterized as books of magic and incantations that, like those of witches, deserved to be burned.¹⁰ Likewise, the prominent role of the covenant in puritan soteriology provided further important opportunities for Anglican conformists to compare and equate godly covenanting, a form of spiritual apostasy in loyalist eyes, with those compacts made between witches and the Devil.¹¹

In time, such thinking was extended to all those 'rebels' who opposed the crown, especially those who aligned themselves with the Whigs during and after the Exclusion Crisis and who, more often than not, were widely perceived as working in tandem with their dissenting allies. According to Matthew Fowler (d. 1683), preaching before the assize judges at Shrewsbury in the summer of 1681, the world at this time was full of 'devilish wisdom', which, he argued, consisted not only 'in the Knowledge and practice of those unlawful Arts of Witchcraft, Sorcery, [and] Necromancy . . . but also, in the imagining, contriving, and putting into Execution, mischievous Plots and Designs against the Peace and safety of Kingdoms, Churches and Civil Societies'.¹² The Whigs, too, used certain words like charms. The word 'country' was a case in point, there being 'something of Magical Incantation in it' according to the Anglican apologist Edward Foreness. His colleague John Lambe (d. 1708) claimed the word 'liberty' had much the same effect on some men, who were 'bewitched with the word . . . as with a Charm'.¹³ Others alluded to the pernicious rumour-mongering of the crown's opponents which they compared to a witch's power to utter imprecations and so blast a child to death.¹⁴ In a similar fashion, the clubs, cabals, and 'associations' of the Whigs were frequently compared to the meetings of devils and witches, where it was noted that religious and political dissidents frequently failed to repeat the Lord's Prayer, or if they complied, did so

(London, 1673), 17; J. Fitzwilliam, *A Sermon Preach'd at Cottenham, near Cambridge* (London, 1683), 25; L. Womock, *The Dressing Up of the Crown. In a Sermon Preached at St Edmunds Bury in Suffolk . . . When His Majestie was there Solemnly Proclaimed King of England* [17 May 1660] (London, 1661), 22; W. Wray, *The Rebellious City Destroyed. Being an Anniversary Sermon in Memory of the Dreadful Fire of London* [St Olave Hart Street, London, 2 September 1682] (London, 1682), 16.

¹⁰ See, for example, Anon., *An Awakening Word in Season* (London, 1684), 7; Long, *King David's Danger and Deliverance*, 13; T. Long, *The Original of War: Or, The Causes of Rebellion. A Sermon Preached in the Castle of Exon . . . Before Thomas Lord Bishop of Exon, and Other His Majesties Justices of the Peace for the County of Devon* [15 January 1683/4] (London, 1684), 23, 28; J. Paradise, *Hadadrimmon, Sive Threnodia Anglicana ob Regicidium, A Sermon on Davids Humiliation for Cutting off the Royal Robe* [Westbury, 30 January 1661] (London, 1661), 22, 32.

¹¹ See, for example, J. Cragge, *The Royal Prerogative Vindicated in the Converted Recusant . . . A Sermon Preached at the Assises at Monmouth* [30 March 1661] (London, 1661), 7; A. Frezer, *The Wickedness and Punishment of Rebellion* [Dordrecht, 26 July 1685] (Rotterdam, 1686), 19–20; W. Gostwyke, *A Sermon Preached at . . . Cambridge* [26 July 1685] (Cambridge, 1685), 5–6.

¹² M. Fowler, 'H' *ANΩΘEN ΣΟΦΙΑ. Or, the Properties of Heavenly Wisdom* [Shrewsbury, 24 July 1681] (London, 1682), 4.

¹³ E. Foreness, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Honourable Sir Robert Leicester of Tabley* [11 July 1684] (London, 1684), 12; J. Lambe, *The Liberty of Human Nature, Discuss'd, Stated, and Limited, in a Sermon* (London, 1684), 35; cf. T. Cartwright, *A Sermon Preached upon the Anniversary Solemnity of the Happy Inauguration of . . . King James II* (London, 1686), 33.

¹⁴ R. Kingston, *The Cause and Cure of Offences: in a Discourse on Matth. 18 7* (London, 1682), 52.

backwards, in the fashion of the stereotypical witch.¹⁵ Those who engaged in such subversion were also castigated for perjuring themselves like witches.¹⁶ The solution, as in the case of 'real' witches, was clear. Only legal sanction with the ultimate penalty of death was ever likely to rid the nation of such diabolical pests, an outcome that was often justified by another biblical text, Exodus 22:18: 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.' In 1675, the Surrey preacher John Heigham (d. 1684), who called for a witch hunt against all dissidents, cited the laws against witches as providing a fitting precedent for the legal execution of rebels. In the same work, he described the exposure of rebels as akin to scratching witches, and compared those who failed to digest the message of Romans, Chapter 13, on obedience, with those servants of Satan who were unable to read the Lord's Prayer.¹⁷

There is little doubt that the growing fear of rebellion and the possibility of a new civil war unleashed by the Exclusion Crisis (1679–82) led to an upsurge in the use of such demonological rhetoric in loyalist and Tory circles. In London, for example, the election of a new mayor provided further opportunities for Tory clergymen to hammer home the message equating Whig activism with rebellion and witchcraft.¹⁸ Occasionally, such pulpit rhetoric threatened to spill over into violence. In February 1683, for example, a loyal prebendary at Chichester Cathedral was reported to have preached an inflammatory sermon before the duke of Monmouth on the text of 1 Samuel 15:23 that almost provoked a riot. An anonymous government agent in the city reported that the loyal preacher had:

made so full a parallel of rebellion and witchcraft that the Duke did not stay. Some of his party stayed, but behaved more like brutes and madmen than Christians, cursing the preacher with bitter imprecations and, after sermon was done, followed the prebendary out into the cloister, giving rude language for his most loyal discourse . . . [Others] went out in the midst of the sermon, impatient to hear such a discovery of their horrid nature and danger of rebellion.¹⁹

¹⁵ See, for example, Hesketh, *Sermon*, 27–8; Stainforth, *Assize Sermon*, 26.

¹⁶ See, for example, J. B., *Kedarminster Stuff* (London, 1681), 19–20; T. Comber, *The Nature and Usefulness of Solemn Judicial Swearing with the Impiety and Mischief of Vain and False-Swearing* [York assizes, 14 July 1681] (London, 1682), 35–6. John Allen, chaplain to the bishop of Chester, compared perjurers to witches, sorcerers, and necromancers on the basis of the Council of Eynsham, convened by King Aethelred in 1009: J. Allen, *Of Perjury. A Sermon Preach'd at the Assizes Held at Chester* [4 April 1682] (London, 1682), 22. Comparing political perjurers in this way to witches may have inadvertently undermined the sanctity of oath-taking, as well as cast suspicion over the testimony of politically motivated witnesses in late seventeenth-century witchcraft trials. For the debate over the role of oath-taking in early modern England, see E. Vallance, *Revolutionary England and the National Covenant: State Oaths, Protestations and the Political Nation, 1663–1682* (Woodbridge, 2005).

¹⁷ [J. Heigham], *A Looking-Glass for Loyalty: or the Subjects Duty to his Sovereign* (London, 1675), unpaginated epistle dedicatory, 78–9, 86. For other examples of Anglican clergymen conflating 1 Samuel 15:23 with Exodus 22:18, see E. Boys, *Sixteen Sermons, Preached upon Several Occasions* (London, 1672), iii, 76; T. Bruce, *Monarchy Maintained. In a Sermon Preached at St Anne Blackfryers* (London, 1682), 19–20; Heyricke, *Character of a Rebel*, 6.

¹⁸ For examples, see H. Dove, *A Sermon Preached before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor of the City of London, and the Court of Aldermen* [Bow, 1682] (London, 1682), 24–5; G. Hascard, *A Sermon Preached . . . on the Feast of St Michael, 1679. At the Election of Sir Robert Clayton to be Lord Mayor* (London, 1680), 18–19; Hesketh, *Sermon* [Bow, 1683], 27–8.

¹⁹ CSPD, 1 January–30 June 1683, 70.

The diabolical stigma surrounding the duke as one of the foremost proponents and the chief beneficiary of exclusion may later have encouraged the rumour that he and his circle engaged in actual witchcraft. Following his capture in the aftermath of the Battle of Sedgemoor in July 1685, one reporter claimed that a pocketful of manuscripts had been found on the body of the duke containing 'spells, charms, and conjurations . . . written with his own hand'. Shortly afterwards, a government spy in Holland reported that two of the duke's sisters had purchased a magical sword (in all probability from the radical Whig activist and witch hunter, Dr William Boreman) which they hoped to bestow on their brother or, if dead, on another to avenge his death. In addition, they were said to make pretence to magical arts and pursue the secrets of the philosopher's stone.²⁰ The duke was not alone, however, in being the focus of such *ad hominem* attacks cloaked in the language of witchcraft. The Whig leader the earl of Shaftesbury was routinely accused of 'bewitching' his followers to 'associate with him'. In 1677, as fears began to grow that Charles II would be succeeded by his Catholic brother, the earl was accused by the political pamphleteer Marchamont Nedham (1620–1678) of using political rhetoric like charms to 'bewitch' the multitude, in much the same way as the 'witchcrafts' of an earlier generation of dissidents had 'bereaved the people of their senses' in 1641.²¹ It is not surprising perhaps that in the heat of the renewed political conflict that erupted in 1679, Shaftesbury was routinely mocked by recourse to the language of popular demonology. Like witches who could be identified through their physical deformities, the great Whig peer was likewise mocked and derided for the additional 'teat' that he carried on his body in the form of a tap fitted to release fluid from a stomach ulcer. In the wake of the defeat of the exclusionist movement, he was also burned in effigy as a conjuror.²²

As Nedham's contribution suggests, it was not just sermons that were implanting demonological conceits in the minds of the populace. Tory pamphleteers and journalists were equally as likely as loyal clergymen to contribute to a poisonous rhetoric that equated all dissent, both religious and political, with witchcraft and sorcery.²³ In time, such concerns found a new outlet in the promotion and publication of loyal addresses in the provinces in which the associations of the Whigs were widely construed as the product of 'the infatuations of the Witchcraft of Rebellion'.²⁴ The logic of such thinking even appeared to permeate the response of those subject to such blandishments. In 1686, for example, Sir Robert Southwell (1635–1702) wrote to his friend

²⁰ HMC, *Appendix to the Third Report* [MSS of the Duke of Devonshire at Bolton Abbey, York] (London, 1872), 41; BL, Add. MS 41,812, fos 236r–v. The stories may have arisen from the duke's predilection for astrology and employment of politically engaged astrologers such as John Partridge and John Holwell.

²¹ Anon., *The Character of a Disbanded Courtier* (London, 1682), 3.

²² T. Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II* (Cambridge, 1987), 147, 170. A few years later the 'conjuror' Titus Oates and his 'Lapland associates' were held culpable for the freezing over of the Thames: *ibid.*, 209.

²³ See, for example, Anon., *A Discourse Concerning High Treason* (London, 1683), A2r–v.

²⁴ *London Gazette*, nos 1718 [Macclesfield, 4 May 1682], 1860 [Leeds, 28 July 1683].

Sir William Petty (1623–1687) advising moderation and caution in his response to the new regime of James II in Ireland. Interestingly, he did so by counselling his irascible and more radical friend that while it was easy to diagnose the political ills of the kingdom, a cure was much more elusive, for 'a consultation of Doctours is scarce to be thought of, for such advising might be called Combination and soe pass for witchcraft'.²⁵ Recourse to such language also began to permeate the debates and discourse of Parliament itself as, for example, in 1680 when the Whig turncoat Sir Robert Peyton (d. 1689) was expelled from the House of Commons. It was later alleged that the Speaker of the House no less had accused Peyton of having 'consulted with the devil Gadbury, and hug'd the Witch Cellier'.²⁶

In the eyes of many loyalist subjects, there is little doubt that rebellion and witchcraft were becoming conflated in such a way as to exaggerate the threat of the former at the expense of the latter. Indeed, for many, rebellion was not simply analogous with witchcraft but was now increasingly seen as having superseded that sin or crime, as traditionally understood, in the minds of a large section of the governing classes. This is evident from the way in which the biblical text from the book of Samuel that appeared to compare rebellion with witchcraft was increasingly glossed after 1660 to mean that 'rebellion *is* the sin of witchcraft'. Witchcraft, accordingly, receded as a real threat to the body politic at the same time as religious and political dissidents of various persuasions were becoming increasingly subject to the full rigour of the law, as well as impassioned hostility in loyal pulpits and the press. Not surprisingly, perhaps, it is possible to discern a sceptical undercurrent with regard to witchcraft, as traditionally understood, in much of this polemical literature. Rebels, for example, were frequently portrayed as irrational and deluded like witches, their ill-conceived thoughts the product of 'the Phanatick suggestions of a melancholic Daemon within them' that served as little more than bugbears to frighten the people.²⁷ Many, moreover, were said to use the language of hocus pocus and the tricks of legerdemain to inveigle or 'bewitch' the people into rebellion, an unconscious echo perhaps of the kind of arguments used by sceptics like Reginald Scot in the late sixteenth century.²⁸ Loyal commentators may also have minimized the threat of 'real' witches by laying greater emphasis upon the idea that the Devil, always the supreme

²⁵ Marquis of Lansdowne (ed.), *The Petty–Southwell Correspondence 1676–1687. Edited from the Bowood Papers* (London, 1928), 206. Petty responded in characteristically forthright and sceptical fashion by claiming that his 'disease' was both 'manifest and notorious . . . a crime and like the sin of Witchcraft', which he scoffingly dismissed in a nonsensical rhyme: 'Hulchy, Pulchy, Suckla mee Hoblum, Doblum, Dominee': *ibid.*, 207.

²⁶ B. Henning (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1660–1690*, 3 vols (London, 1983), iii, 234; Anon, *Verbum Diei: Or, A Word in Season* (London, 1685), 20.

²⁷ Milbourne, *Originals of Rebellion*, 37–8; cf. R. Kingston, *Vivat Rex. A Sermon Preached before the . . . Mayor, Aldermen, Council and Citizens of Bristol: Upon the Discovery of the Late Treasonable Plot* [25 July 1683] (London, 1683), 4.

²⁸ See, for example, J. Shaw, *No Reformation of the Established Reformation* (London, 1685), 173. In the same work, Shaw invoked 1 Samuel 15:23, concluding 'once a Witch always a Witch, once a Rebel, always a Rebel': *ibid.*, 245–6. Scot's *Discoverie* appeared in new editions in 1651, 1654, and 1665.

strategist, had now changed tack and was using different accomplices to achieve his wicked ends in the world. Many Anglican preachers, for example, invoked the idea of the Devil as an 'angel of light' (2 Corinthians 11:14), who now appeared as a friend to rebels and schismatics rather than as an accomplice of harmless old women.²⁹ In similar fashion, William Wray (d. 1692) likened 'the Enthusiasm of these latter Ages' to a form of 'Spiritual Witchcraft', which he defined as 'the communications of a Satanical Spirit with Mens deluded Phancies, whereby the Devil hath made a better Market of his Sophisticated Impostures among us of this Nation, than ever he did in the World before'.³⁰ Such comments do not of themselves represent outright scepticism with regard to the reality of witchcraft, but their repetition, I suggest, did have the cumulative effect of downgrading the seriousness of the crime in the eyes of many Anglican clerics. Edward Sclater, for example, made no secret as to what he believed posed the greater threat to the peace of the kingdom when in 1681 he ruminated on 1 Samuel 15:23, and the relative significance of the twin evils of rebellion and witchcraft. He thus concluded that 'Witchcraft if I mistake not is not so great being perhaps but a secret renouncing of him and subscription to the power of Satan, without any act of such hostility against God.' Rebellion, on the other hand, was almost beyond words, the Old Testament prophet Samuel falling 'short of its guilt even when he call'd it as the sin of witchcraft'.³¹ Much the same approach informed the attempt by the staunch Anglican Izaak Walton (1593–1683) to quell the 'fury and zeal of the discontented and restless Nonconformists'. Citing Galatians 5:20, which equated witchcraft with murder and sedition, Walton argued that many, including himself, believed sedition to be a far graver crime than witchcraft, which 'hath its limits and bounds set to it, perhaps so as not to take away the life of any man, but only to do mischief to a single person, or a Family, and must end there'.³² Contemporaries eventually became wise to such linguistic legerdemain. Years later, Richard Boulton, for example, writing in response to Francis Hutchinson's late sceptical treatise on the subject, asserted that 'the Doctor might as well say, that *Witchcraft* is Rebellion'.³³

²⁹ Powell, *Religious Rebel*, 20–1; S. Scattergood, *A Sermon Preached at Blockley in Worcestershire upon the Thanksgiving Day* [9 September 1683] (London, 1683), 29. I am grateful to Stuart Clark for reminding me that the text itself was not intrinsically sceptical, but formed an essential element of demonological thinking in the late medieval and early modern period.

³⁰ Wray, *Rebellious City Destroyed*, 15–16.

³¹ Edward Sclater, *A Sermon Preached in the Church of Putney in the County of Surrey, Upon the 24th of April 1681. His Majesty's Declaration Being Read That Day* (London, 1681), 6, 9–10, 16, 24, 28–9, 30. For similar attempts to paint rebellion as worse than witchcraft, rather than its equal, see L. Sharpe, *Separation Convicted of Prophanation, Oppression, Persecution, Rebellion, Self-Destruction, and Antichristianism* (London, 1681), 34.

³² N. N. [i.e. Izaak Walton], *Love and Truth: In Two Modest and Peaceable Letters. Concerning the Distempers of the Present Times* (London, 1680), 5–6, 28. The first letter had originally been published in 1668 during the debate over comprehension: see B. P., *A Modest and Peaceable Letter Concerning Comprehension &c* (London, 1668), 7–8.

³³ R. Boulton, *The Possibility and Reality of Magick, Sorcery, and Witchcraft Demonstrated... In Answer to Dr Hutchinson's Historical Essay* (London, 1722), 137.

WITCHCRAFT, POLITICS, AND LINGUISTIC
INSTABILITY

In many respects, the process whereby witchcraft was increasingly understood to represent an act of political apostasy was part of a much wider process, initiated by the civil wars, in which language itself had become destabilized and words began to take on new meanings. Despite the hopes of those who sought to re-establish the old order in Church and state, the Restoration witnessed a continuation of this process, which, if anything, accelerated during the troubled years of the Exclusion Crisis. Contemporaries were only too aware of such developments, frequently commenting upon the trend for linguistic innovation following the onset of religious and political upheaval in mid-century. When the royalist earl of Newcastle was accused by the parliamentarians in 1642 of 'malignancy', he wryly commented 'this is new Learning, and requires a new Dictionary to warrant it'. The emergence of radical sects such as the Quakers simply compounded the problem. A few years later, William Dillingham (c.1617–1689), master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, baffled by the verbal abuse of a Quaker preacher, asserted 'what a troublesome man is this, that imposeth upon the world a necessity of making new dictionaries if they mean to converse with him'.³⁴ Historians of the early modern period, sensitive to the impact of the 'linguistic turn', have become increasingly aware of how language shaped religious, political, and cultural developments in this period, and of how language not only reflects, but, in the words of John Walter, 'actively constitutes the social order'. Others, such as Richard Ashcraft, have described how political conflict in the period increased the sensitivity of contemporaries to the ways in which words were used in everyday discourse.³⁵ More recently, Mark Knights has noted how, in the period after 1660, the political divisions engendered by the emergence of party began to distort language in a variety of ways. Not only were 'the meanings of words and phrases . . . contested and destabilized', but 'language became fractured, invested with contested and partisan meanings' and in the process began to unravel, 'for language relied on a shared, common, sense'.³⁶

Words changed meaning, and common political terms began to take on sinister new connotations that were frequently invested with a diabolical taint. Echoing the

³⁴ W. Cavendish, earl of Newcastle, *A Declaration of the Right Honourable Earle of Newcastle* (York, 1642), A3r; W. Dillingham, *Prove All Things, Hold Fast that which is Good; 1. Thess. 5.21 Handled in Two Sermons at S. Maries in Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1656), 50; cf. the contrite Presbyterian, Ralph Farmer, who lamented the inversion of language and meaning in 1660: [R. Farmer], *A Plain-Dealing, and Plain-Meaning Sermon* (London, 1660), 31.

³⁵ J. Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: The Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge, 1999), 263; R. Ashcraft, *Revolutionary Politics and Locke's Two Treatises of Government* (Princeton, 1986), 69; R. Ashcraft, 'The Language of Political Conflict in Restoration Literature', in R. Ashcraft and A. Roper (eds), *Politics as Reflected in Literature* (Los Angeles, 1989), 19. For an attempt to demonstrate how languages evolve and undergo shifts in meaning in relation to unfolding historical events, see K. Sharpe, 'A Commonwealth of Meanings: Languages, Analogues, Ideas, and Politics', in K. Sharpe (ed.), *Politics and Ideas in Early Stuart England* (London and New York, 1989), 3–71.

³⁶ M. Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain* (Oxford, 2005), 275.

concerns of many royalist preachers after 1660, an electoral pamphleteer wondered in 1701 'what strange magick spell lies hid in the word commonwealth [for] it frights men like a goblin'.³⁷ The process was particularly evident in the tendency of those engaged in day-to-day religious and political debate to invoke nicknames and invert the normal meaning of words. The Quakers, for example, were repeatedly denounced as witches and sorcerers, and on occasions prosecuted as such. At the same time, they were more than happy to address their enemies with similar epithets, disparaging those who sought to retain a state-maintained ministry as the agents of Satan, witches, and conjurors. Contemporaries were only too aware of the increasing fixation of religious and political adversaries with this way of speaking. As the puritan theologian John Owen (1616–1683) perspicuously noted in 1646, 'those names which men are known by, when they are oppressed, they commonly use against others whom they seeke to oppresse'.³⁸ Words and their meanings subsequently became the object of fierce scrutiny, and were identified by many as representing the main obstacle to religious and political harmony. In 1674, for example, Richard Baxter expressed the view that the religious differences between men were deliberately exaggerated by those 'engaged in Parties and Interests against each other, causing most to take all in the worst sense, and to make each other seem far more erroneous than they are, and to turn differing names into damnable heresies'.³⁹

Metaphor, in particular, was prone to linguistic instability of the kind suggested here. Richard Ashcraft, for example, has pointed to the example of the Restoration polemicist and opponent of toleration Samuel Parker (1640–1688), who was quick to note the extent to which the 'deluded multitude' had become misled by the sectarian invocation of 'a few gaudy metaphors and allegories'.⁴⁰ For Parker and other conformists, the overuse of metaphor and misuse of common words and phrases subverted the true meaning of the terms of religious discourse and undermined, in the process, religious uniformity and political obedience. Parker, however, was being disingenuous in insinuating that it was the dissenters who monopolized the use of such linguistic tropes in religious debate. The constant recourse to 1 Samuel 15:23 and other biblical verses on the part of Parker's clerical colleagues, which encouraged congregations to associate witchcraft with religious and political subversion, strongly suggests that this was a rhetorical strategy that straddled the religious and political divide. Witchcraft sceptics were all too aware of such issues. Scot, Filmer, Ady, and John Webster made great play of the fact that misunderstandings surrounding biblical 'witchcraft' were largely the product of mistranslations and philological ignorance. It is probably no coincidence that Webster, in his radical phase, routinely castigated religious opponents as 'spiritual

³⁷ Anon., *The Claims of the People Essayed. In a Letter from the Country* (London, 1701), 33.

³⁸ P. Elmer, "Saints or Sorcerers": Quakerism, Demonology and the Decline of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century England', in J. Barry, M. Hester, and G. Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge, 1996), 145–79; J. Owen, *A Vision of Unchangeable Free Mercy in Sending the Means of Grace to Undeserved Sinners* (London, 1646), 52–3.

³⁹ R. Baxter, *A Full and Easie Satisfaction which is the True and Safe Religion* (London, 1674), 73.

⁴⁰ Ashcraft, *Revolutionary Politics*, 69.

witches' while at the same time advocating the merits of a universal language—a utopian dream shared by supporters of witchcraft such as Cave Beck and Andrew Paschall.

RESTORATION ANGLICANISM, MAGISTRACY, AND THE DECLINE OF WITCHCRAFT

If linguistic instability did facilitate new ways of conceptualizing older verities in everyday discourse, including belief in diabolical witchcraft, then it seems natural to expect such developments to have infiltrated the mentality of those loyal magistrates and judges entrusted with dispensing justice after 1660. I have already noted the extent to which support for witch trials after the Restoration was disproportionately the product of fears within sectarian and dissenting circles with regard to the providential workings of the Devil. The tendency of loyal magistrates to reject such claims, and to focus instead upon the prosecution of religious and political dissenters instead of witches, was, I argue here, a manifestation of a growing scepticism upon the part of such men that was informed by their immersion in the religious and political debates of the mid- to late seventeenth century. Scepticism here may be too strong a word for the image that I would like to convey of this process in action. The tendency of loyal Anglicans to view opposition to Church and state as a species of witchcraft and offenders as what I term surrogate witches, nonetheless required a residual commitment to the idea of witchcraft as both real and possible. Consequently, it would be wrong to suggest that the period between 1660 and 1688 witnessed the creation of a clear-cut divide on the subject of witchcraft between believers and sceptics. Just as religious and political beliefs and allegiances were uncertain and unstable in this period, so too were ideas about witchcraft. Contemporaries were able to draw upon various explanations and definitions of witchcraft, which allowed for a spectrum of views and opinions that might be invoked in any single instance. It is my contention here that such instability—inherent in witchcraft beliefs from the outset—was exacerbated by the way in which loyal Anglicans after 1660 repeatedly invoked the idea of witchcraft as a form of political apostasy, which in turn informed judicial scepticism and attitudes among magistrates to the prosecution of witches.⁴¹

This is not to minimize the importance of other factors in the decline of witchcraft. As James Sharpe and others have pointed out, the legal response to witchcraft, and shifts in attitude to the prosecution of witches among judges and jurors, is both a vital and complex aspect of any historical account that seeks to explain the demise of witchcraft trials. New evidentiary standards and changes in judicial procedures, alongside a growing abhorrence of 'popular' judicial remedies

⁴¹ I would like to thank both Stuart Clark and Jonathan Barry for pointing out that my use of the term 'surrogate witch' to describe Restoration religious and political dissidents must, of necessity, assume residual adherence to the idea of witchcraft on the part of those loyalists who employed the term 'witch' to decry their opponents. Otherwise, the rhetorical strategy would carry little conviction.

against witches, clearly played a significant role in undermining support for witch-hunting in elite circles. Here, however, I would like to stress the idea that the mentality of those responsible for oversight of the law was first and foremost shaped by the wider religious and political context in which the law operated. This is evident in the ranks of the senior judiciary and assize judges that oversaw the dwindling number of witchcraft trials in the period after 1660, as well as among local magistrates who were first responsible for processing accusations of witchcraft and deciding whether such cases should proceed to trial.⁴²

Despite the acute sensitivity of contemporaries of all persuasions to witchcraft and demonic activity in the immediate wake of the Restoration, Charles II appointed judges, with the exception of men like Matthew Hale and John Archer (d. 1682), who were by and large remarkably averse to convicting witches.⁴³ The royalist stalwart Sir Robert Hyde (d. 1665) thus acquitted two women arraigned for witchcraft at Worcester in March 1661 on the grounds that a person could not be re-indicted or arraigned for the same crime.⁴⁴ A year later, Sir John Kelyng (1607–1671) emerged as one of the few voices cautioning judicial restraint at the infamous trial of the Lowestoft witches at Bury St Edmunds, where the moderate Hale helped secure the conviction of two women for bewitching the children of a prominent local nonconformist. Both Hyde and Kelyng were ferocious opponents of Dissent who shared a particular antipathy for the Quakers. Kelyng's animosity

⁴² The precise manner in which the opinions of judges, magistrates, jurors, and others engaged in witch trials were shaped and informed by these wider religious and political currents is open to further study and debate. Here, I reject the idea that the judicial system was somehow immune from such external pressures. There is now a growing literature on changing attitudes in legal circles to witchcraft as a crime, including the acceptance of new evidentiary standards with regard to the establishment of 'matters of fact' and greater emphasis on due process of law; for an overview of such developments in Europe, see especially B. Levack, 'Witchcraft and the Law', in Levack (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft*, 477–81. For England, see B. Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1983), 194–226; B. Shapiro, 'Religion and the Law: Evidence, Proof and "Matter of Fact", 1660–1700', in N. Landau (ed.), *Law, Crime and English Society 1660–1830* (Cambridge, 2002), 185–207; M. Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and Evidence in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, 198 (2008), 33–70.

⁴³ For Hale, see above, 227–8. Archer was noted by Richard Baxter as 'one that privately favoured Religious People'. Among others, he befriended the ejected minister Francis Chandler (1618–1667). In 1663, Archer oversaw the trial and execution of the Somerset witch Julian Cox. In the same year, he was said to have shown remarkable moderation and favour to a group of ejected ministers at the Dorchester assizes: M. Sylvester (ed.), *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (London, 1696), iii, 59; *Cal. Rev.*, 108; J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus: Or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions* (London, 1681), ii, 191–8; *Cal. Rev.*, 288. The report in Glanvill is based on a letter written by one Mr Pool, an official working with Archer, in a letter to the judge's nephew, a Cambridge student, in 1672.

⁴⁴ R. D. Hunt, 'Henry Townshend's "Notes of the Office of a Justice of the Peace", 1661–3', *Miscellany II* (Leeds, Worcestershire Hist. Soc., 5, 1967), 94; TNA, ASSI 2/1, fo. 55. The local magistrate who recorded this judgement, Henry Townshend (1600–1663), was a fellow royalist who would appear to have shared Hyde's doubts. In his diary, he recorded the fact that 'many charges' were levelled against the two women, including the suggestion that they would use their powers to kill the restored King, but 'little proved'. Elsewhere, he mocked the attempt by some to prove the women's guilt by swimming them in the Severn, suggesting the ordeal was as much an act of witchcraft as that allegedly carried out by the accused: J. W. Willis Bund (ed.), *The Diary of Henry Townshend of Elmley Lovett 1640–1663*, 2 vols (London, Worcestershire Hist. Soc., 1915–20), i, 40–1; Hunt, 'Henry Townshend's "Notes"', 118.

towards the Quakers was in large part informed by his deep-seated conviction that they were the agents of rebellion and subversion (as manifest in their opposition to oaths) rather than religious apostates or idolaters; rebels, that is, rather than heretics. Kelyng also played a prominent role in drafting the Act of Uniformity (1662), which formed the legal cornerstone of the prescription of Dissent.⁴⁵

The trend toward scepticism with regard to witchcraft among the senior ranks of the judiciary, accompanied by a growing focus on the prosecution of all forms of religious and political dissent, is also evident in the careers of Richard Rainsford and Francis North. It may also have informed the thinking of the most notorious of Tory judges, George Jeffreys, of Bloody Assize fame. Rainsford (1605–1680) presided over a case of witchcraft at the Cornish assizes in 1671, which was subsequently thrown out. Significantly, perhaps, this occurred at the height of a clampdown on nonconformity in the diocese of Exeter spearheaded by Bishop Anthony Sparrow (1612–1685), who praised Rainsford for his 'strict execution of the Laws' and encouragement of local justices which had 'much heartned the loial partie, & I Hope, almost quite suppressed the factions'. A year later, Rainsford was responsible for overseeing the trial and execution of two witches at Malmesbury in Wiltshire, though his subsequent comments on the case and that of others suggests that he used his authority to prevent much greater loss of life.⁴⁶

Rainsford's cautious approach to such matters would appear to have mirrored that of one of his protégés, Francis North (1637–1685), whose papers contain an account of Rainsford's actions at Malmesbury, including his willingness to indulge the witchcraft fears of a local gentleman, Sir James Long (c.1617–1692).⁴⁷ North had first-hand experience of the kind of dilemma faced by Rainsford. In 1682, he was present at the Exeter assizes when his fellow judge, Sir Thomas Raymond (c.1627–1683), presided over the trial and execution of three Bideford women for witchcraft. Like his younger brother and biographer, Roger North (1651–1734), who believed that most cases of suspected bewitchment were nothing more than impostures, perpetrated in the main by Catholics and Protestant sectaries, Francis was something of a sceptic. According to his brother, he was critical of Raymond's role in the trial and his failure to do more to direct the jury towards an alternative verdict. But there were extenuating circumstances. In all probability, Raymond, confronted by a hostile mob that, North hinted, would appear to have been encouraged by local Whigs, adopted a passive response for fear that any attempt

⁴⁵ For Hyde and Kelyng, see *ODNB*; C. Horle, *The Quakers and the English Legal System 1660–1688* (Philadelphia, 1988), 107–10. Kelyng adopted an equally partisan approach to the prosecution of the Bawdy House rioters in 1668, where once again he was opposed by the 'moderate' Hale: T. Harris, 'The Bawdy House Riots of 1668', *Historical Journal*, 29 (1986), 548–50.

⁴⁶ The Cornish case is particularly intriguing as a local government correspondent claimed that one of the witches, 'a Presbyterian or Baptize', had used her diabolical powers in order to undermine the regime and inflict harm upon a local justice who was noted as a persecutor of nonconformists. Rainsford, it would appear, was more interested in prosecuting such people for their religious dissent rather than any act of illusory *maleficium*: C. L. Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London, 1933), 442; TNA, ASSI 23/1; *CSPD*, 1671, 105, 171; Bodl., Add. MS C 305, fo. 225. For Malmesbury, see Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 441, 442–3; TNA, ASSI 23/1; ASSI 24/22, fo. 185v.

⁴⁷ For Long's role in this case, see note 58 in Chapter 5.

to argue for caution might create even greater opportunities for the 'faction . . . to set afoot the old trade of witch finding'.⁴⁸ Five years later North dismissed a case of suspected witchcraft at Lyme Regis in Dorset in which he detected the fraudulent voiding of pins.⁴⁹

The trial of the Bideford witches at Exeter in 1682 marked the last recorded execution for witchcraft in England. It also coincided, as North's comment suggests, with a period of intense political conflict engendered by the Exclusion Crisis.⁵⁰ There is some evidence to suggest that the case against the three women was the product of political partisanship and a desire, perhaps, on the part of the government's opponents to expose or embarrass the regime into taking action against a true enemy of the godly state. One of the leading protagonists at the trial, the clergyman Francis Hann, had long been a thorn in the side of the diocesan authorities. Moreover, Bideford, like Exeter, was a hotbed of political conflict and division. It is also possible that the clerical establishment in Exeter may have unwittingly encouraged witch-hunting through the preaching of loyal ministers such as Thomas Long (1621–1707), prebend of Exeter, whose son, also Thomas (d. 1707), married the daughter of Bishop Anthony Sparrow. While Sparrow, as bishop (1667–76), had waged a lengthy campaign of opposition to dissent in the church courts and had tried his level best to encourage local justices to follow suit in the secular courts, Long preached consistently on the dangers of sedition and dissent and the merits of passive obedience and loyalty to the crown. In doing so, he frequently invoked the now familiar image of the rebel as witch, comparing the 'murmuring' of dissidents with the 'sin of Witchcraft'.⁵¹

Following the execution of the Bideford witches and the Tory reaction, Long was in the vanguard of those ministers who now used every opportunity to hammer home the message that religious and political disobedience was a species of witchcraft. As a prebend of the cathedral and preacher at the assizes, he used both as a convenient and very public space in which to expand upon the subject, consistently invoking a range of biblical texts in order to underline the point that

⁴⁸ For a detailed analysis of the trial, including the role of the sceptical North, see J. Barry, *Witchcraft and Demonology in South-West England, 1640–1789* (Basingstoke, 2012), 58–102. For annotated editions of the three pamphlet accounts of the trials, see P. Elmer (ed.), *English Witchcraft 1560–1736*, vol. 5: *The Later English Trial Pamphlets* (London, 2003), 1–62, 361–6.

⁴⁹ TNA, ASSI 23/3, sub 4 July 1687 [gaol delivery]; Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 375–6, 445; G. Roberts, *The Social History of the People of the Southern Counties of England in Past Centuries* (London, 1856), 525–8; G. J. Davies (ed.), *Touchyng Witchcraft and Sorcery* (Dorchester, Dorset Rec. Soc., 9, 1985), 33–9.

⁵⁰ The sentence of death passed on Alicia Molland, also at Exeter, in March 1685 is normally considered to represent the last execution for witchcraft in England. However, there is no evidence that the sentence was carried out. Just a few months later, one Avis Molland appeared as an informer, alongside two other notable supporters of the King, before the city's justices, where she reported on the activities of various plotters and rioters: DRO, ECA C1/66, fo. 101v.

⁵¹ Long, *Sermon Against Murmuring*, 18, 22. My own account of the trial of the Bideford witches, like that of Jonathan Barry, is fundamentally at odds with that of Stephen Timmons, who has attempted, somewhat crudely, to depict these events as a product of Tory-sponsored political expediency: S. Timmons, 'Witchcraft and Rebellion in Late Seventeenth-Century Devon', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 10 (2006), 297–330; cf. Barry, *Witchcraft and Demonology*, 63.

rebels, like witches, seldom, if ever, repent.⁵² Not surprisingly, however, it was the much-cited text from the book of Samuel that Long chose as his text on 26 July 1685, when in the wake of the defeat of Monmouth's rebel army at Sedgemoor, loyal ministers across England once more reminded their congregations that rebellion was tantamount to witchcraft. Within months, Lord Chief Justice George Jeffreys (1645–1689) was riding the western circuit, where, of course, he achieved notoriety as the 'hanging judge', responsible for the execution of hundreds of rebels at the 'Bloody Assizes'. While it is a matter of conjecture, it seems highly probable that as a circuit judge Jeffreys would have imbibed the message of loyal preachers equating sedition with witchcraft. It may also have encouraged him to adopt a sceptical stance when confronted with actual cases of witchcraft. In September 1685, for example, as he sentenced hundreds of rebels at the Exeter assizes, Jeffreys was responsible for overseeing the trial and acquittal of Jane Vallett, accused on three charges of witchcraft. A few weeks later at Bristol, where no trials were held, Jeffreys, who was under no illusions as to the seditious nature of the city, issued a brief, impromptu, and extemporized charge to the grand jurors in which he raised the spectre of the rebel-witch on no fewer than four occasions. Whether or not such sentiments spilled over into outright scepticism with regard to actual witches is difficult to discern. It is noteworthy, however, that when events catapulted Jeffreys into the Tower of London in 1689, his enemies lost no time in speculating as to the disgraced judge's moral failings, which included atheism. In one account, for example, Jeffreys is depicted in the Tower, ruminating on his fate and pondering retribution on his tormentors by turning to magic, which he would have done 'had my small Belief . . . of either a God or a Devil, perswaded me there was any such creature as a Witch, or such an Art as Sorcery'.⁵³

Just as important as the attitude of the senior judiciary towards witchcraft was that of the army of unpaid magistrates in the localities who were the first to encounter and adjudicate the claims of those who believed they were the victims of witches. Again, there would appear to be significant evidence to suggest a link between judicial scepticism among Restoration magistrates and a commitment to the status quo in Church and state after 1660. The career of the Lancashire JP Roger Bradshaigh (1628–1684) exemplified this trend. Bradshaigh served as a

⁵² Long, *King David's Danger and Deliverance*, 10, 13, 28, 37–8; Long, *Original of War*, 23, 28; Long, *Unreasonableness of Rebellion*, 1. For Long, see ODNB.

⁵³ TNA, ASSI 23/3; Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 444; G. W. Keeton, *Lord Chancellor Jeffreys and the Stuart Cause* (London, 1965), 237; G. Jeffreys, *The Charge Given by the Ld Ch Justice Jeffreys, at the City of Bristol, Monday, September 21. 1685. In His Return from His Western Campaign* (1685), 2–3; Anon., *The Lord Chancellors Discovery and Confession: Made in the Time of His Sickness in the Tower* (London, 1689), single sheet broadside. Jeffreys' repeated citation of 1 Samuel 15:23 at the Bristol assizes is reminiscent of an attempt by a Scottish Episcopalian minister to invoke the same text in order to secure the execution of various Covenanter rebels at Ayr in 1666. On this occasion, however, the biblically literate hangman, who was also sympathetic to the Covenanter cause, refused to carry out the hangings on the grounds that the preacher was guilty of exegetical error. The verse from Samuel, he pointed out, referred not to rebellion against man but apostasy against God. He was, however, perfectly happy to execute 'real' witches: R. Wodrow, *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, from the Restauration to the Revolution*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1721–22), appendix 1, 101.

magistrate from 1660 until his death in 1684. He was also an MP in the Cavalier Parliament. Brought up as a Roman Catholic, he later converted to Anglicanism while retaining a deep sympathy for the plight of his former co-religionists. At the same time, he stood out in his native Lancashire as a committed opponent of sedition and dissent in all its myriad forms. It is perhaps not surprising then that Bradshaigh's apparent rejection of witchcraft was manifest in a regular update to the authorities in London regarding the activities of dissenters in the county. On 30 January 1666, a day of heightened emotion for a staunch royalist such as Bradshaigh, he wrote to Secretary Williamson in London, updating the government on the latest activity of local dissenters while concluding his report with an account of the examination of four women suspected of witchcraft. One of those examined described how she and her parents had ridden three black cats at night, one of which had also sucked on her mother's teats, in a manner reminiscent of many earlier English witchcraft trials in which demonic familiars featured prominently. While obliged to send two of the accused to gaol, Bradshaigh confessed to harbouring 'little fayth' in the truth of such claims.⁵⁴ Four years later, he was partly responsible for the punishment of a Wigan woman found guilty of calling one of her neighbours a witch, who was subsequently ordered to wear a bridle and paraded through the streets of the town.⁵⁵

Bradshaigh was not alone among the Lancashire magistracy in combining a passionate hatred for Dissent with disinterest, bordering on disbelief, in cases of supposed witchcraft. Captain Thomas Greenhalgh, who was related to Bradshaigh through marriage and, as a former royalist, was well connected in Anglican circles, demonstrated a commendable lack of zeal when confronted with two complaints of witchcraft in 1671 and 1680.⁵⁶ On the former occasion, he intervened on behalf of Richard Greenhalgh (possibly a relation and close neighbour), who was indicted at the assizes as a wizard and was accused, among other things, of bewitching to death

⁵⁴ TNA, SP 29/146/68, fo. 141r [CSPD, 1665–1666, 225]; Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 411.

⁵⁵ Wigan Archives Service, Court Leet Records, Box 1, roll 32, Michaelmas 1670. Bradshaigh lived at Haigh Hall, near Wigan, and served as mayor of the town in 1661–62 and 1680–81. A Catholic sympathizer who probably reconverted before his death in 1684, he was a notoriously officious persecutor of nonconformists of all denominations: see *Cal. Rev.*, 69, 483; Henning, *House of Commons, 1660–1690*, i, 704–5; Manchester Central Library, L1/40/1/1, 25 June 1662; L1/48/6/1, 35–6, 55 [1665–66], 198 [1661]; CSPD, 1663–1664, 511–12; CSPD, 1665–1666, 546. For continuing suspicions surrounding Bradshaigh's recusancy, see M. Mullett, 'A Receptacle for Papists and an Assilum': Catholicism and Disorder in Late Seventeenth-Century Wigan', *Catholic Historical Review*, 78 (1987), 391–407. Local Anglicans, however, were keen to dispel such rumours. The loyalist minister Richard Wroe, who preached Sir Roger's funeral sermon, claimed that he was falsely slandered as a 'Church Papist': R. Wroe, *Righteousness Encouraged and Rewarded* (London, 1684), 17, 18.

⁵⁶ Greenhalgh, of Brandleholme, near Bury, married Elizabeth Bridgeman, the daughter of Henry Bridgeman (1615–1682), dean of Chester, in 1665. He was the father-in-law of Dr Allan Pennington (1622–1696), who was the brother-in-law of Sir Roger Bradshaigh. This group formed a close network of loyal royalist agents in Cheshire and Lancashire who corresponded regularly with the government in London for much of the 1660s. Greenhalgh may also have suffered for his loyalty prior to the Restoration. In 1659, he was arrested en route for London by a parliamentary militiaman at Grantham in Lincolnshire: CSPD, 1659–1660, 176–7.

a child as well as three others. Greenhalgh the magistrate sought to put pressure on the father of one of the victims and a fellow witness by having them arrested at the behest of the accused witch. Nine years later, Captain Greenhalgh presided over a not guilty verdict in a case of witchcraft at Manchester.⁵⁷ In both cases, the witchcraft trials took place against a background of intense religious and political conflict. In 1671, the county, as elsewhere in England, experienced a renewal of the persecution of dissent following the passage of the Second Conventicle Act in the previous year. The trial of 1680, of course, took place amid growing public anxiety over the succession and the fate of the Church in the hands of a Catholic monarch. Greenhalgh, like Bradshaigh, was committed to bolstering the status quo, and was frequently occupied as a magistrate in searching for arms among potential insurgents as well as waging a long and sustained campaign against the Quakers in Lancashire. Like Bradshaigh, moreover, he too was suspected of harbouring Catholic sympathies. When Greenhalgh was mooted for sheriff of the county in 1667, Edward Kenyon wrote to his brother Roger to warn him against standing as Greenhalgh's under-sheriff for fear that the latter's reputation as a favourer of Catholics would ruin his own reputation and corrupt his soul in the process.⁵⁸

Lancashire, of course, was widely acknowledged as a stronghold of Catholicism as well as a haven for witches. The two, as we have seen, had long been connected in the popular imagination. The scepticism of the Anglican authorities may therefore owe something to a desire to protect Catholic or crypto-Catholic neighbours, many of whom had served the monarchy in the dark days of the civil wars and interregnum. Judicial concern in north-west England was clearly reserved for dissenters rather than witches or Catholics, and is especially evident in a network of diehard Anglican magistrates located on the border between Lancashire and Yorkshire in the old witch-hunting area of Pendle and the Craven district. Here, a group of five like-minded gentlemen-magistrates were responsible for promoting the publication of one of the most original contributions to the witchcraft debate on the side of the sceptics, penned by the former radical John Webster (1611–1682). After the Restoration, Webster, who had spent much of the 1650s articulating a radical vision of an English Church with no tithes or state-financed ministry, settled in his native Clitheroe, where he conformed and practised medicine among the local gentry. During the course of his practice, which was indebted to the innovatory ideas of the Flemish iatrochemist Jan Baptist van Helmont (1580–1644), Webster's new-found respectability led him to foster important alliances among the local Tory squirearchy, who in turn lent their imprimatur to his work on witchcraft.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 410, 412, 413; *HMC. Fourteenth Report. Appendix*. Part IV: *Manuscripts of Lord Kenyon* (London, 1894), 89–90. The accused witch may be the same as the Richard Greenhalgh, yeoman, of Bury, who appeared on the major-general's list of suspect persons in Lancashire in 1655: BL, Add. MS 34,013, fo. 20r.

⁵⁸ Manchester Central Library, L1/48/6/1, 10, 11; L1/40/1/1, 20 December 1665; Lancashire RO, FRM 1/39, 156–7 [1665], 160 [1670], 167 [1674], 170 [1683], 177 [1662], 181 [1670], 182 [1672], 187 [1680]; H. Fishwick (ed.), *The Notebook of the Rev. Thomas Jolly, AD 1671–1693* (Manchester, Chetham Soc., 33, 1894), 27; *HMC. Kenyon MSS*, 80.

⁵⁹ For Webster, see especially *ODNB*; P. Elmer, *The Library of Dr John Webster: The Making of a Seventeenth-Century Radical* (London, *Medical History*, supplement no. 6, 1986), 1–43; M. Mullett,

The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft, published in 1677, was dedicated to five local gentlemen and JPs, all of whom were highly active in the war against Dissent. Two, Henry Marsden (c.1625–1688), who also sat as MP for Clitheroe in two Exclusion parliaments, and William Drake (c.1625–1678), were related through marriage. Thomas Parker (1631–1695) was a firm royalist and was appointed a captain of foot after the Restoration. William Johnson (d. 1681) was another staunch Anglican, who married the daughter of Thomas Comber (1575–1653), master of Trinity College, Cambridge, and a great sufferer for his commitment to the royalist cause. Finally, Sir John Assheton (1621–1697), who unlike the others came from a puritanical background, nonetheless remained loyal to the crown after 1660. Like the others, he was an indomitable opponent of the Quakers, who stigmatized him as a persecutor and ‘greedy impropiator for Tythes’. All worked in tandem, determined to use the full power of the law to persecute and marginalize nonconformity on the Lancashire–Yorkshire border, and like their colleagues Bradshaigh and Greenhalgh, they displayed little interest in the punishment of witches, as their patronage of Webster suggests.⁶⁰

It is not known to what extent Webster was indebted to the thoughts and views of his sponsors among the local judiciary, some of whom, like William Johnson, possessed impressive intellectual connections. Johnson, for example, was able to call upon powerful former colleagues at Trinity College, Cambridge, including Sir Thomas Sclater (1615–1684), whom he named as one of the executors of his will in 1680 (Sclater had married the widow of Johnson’s father-in-law Thomas Comber, master of Trinity and dean of Carlisle). Sclater, a physician by vocation, was an important figure in the government of post-Restoration Cambridge, serving as one of the city’s MPs as well as a JP. Well connected to the medical establishment of Cambridge, with an interest in occult learning (he inherited, via his friend the Cambridge apothecary, John Crane, the manuscripts of the celebrated adept William Butler), he shared much in common with Webster’s intellectual outlook.⁶¹ Sclater may also have shared Webster’s scepticism on the question of witches. During the course of his long career as a local justice, he examined numerous cases

“Men of Knowne Loyalty”: The Politics of the Lancashire Borough of Clitheroe, 1660–1689’, *Northern History*, 21 (1985), 111–12.

⁶⁰ Marsden married Margaret, the daughter of William Drake, at York minster in 1681. It is probably no coincidence that the dissenting minister Oliver Heywood, who frequently noted the deaths of local persecutors of dissent, recorded the death and burial of both William Drake and Henry Marsden, JPs. Moreover, three of the five who remained alive in December 1686 were removed from the commission of the peace as part of James II’s attempt to ingratiate himself with the dissenting community: J. Horsfall Turner (ed.), *The Nonconformist Register of Births, Marriages, and Deaths, Compiled by Rev. Oliver Heywood, 1644–1702* (Brighouse, 1881), 56, 72; TNA, PC 2/71, fo. 187v. For the five men’s involvement in the campaign of legal harassment against the Quakers, see Lancashire RO, FRM 1/39, 93, 203–5, 208, 211, 213, 224, 226; DDB/74, nos 59–61; J. Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers . . . from 1650, to . . . 1689*, 2 vols (London, 1753), ii, 131–2, 137, 149, 168.

⁶¹ TNA, PROB 11/366, fos 205r–v; PROB 11/222, fos 169v–175r. Trinity College was a centre for alchemical speculation in the 1650s which proved particularly attractive to discontented or alienated academics from royalist backgrounds. I hope to explore this subject in more detail in later publications.

of alleged witchcraft but seems to have given little credence to the claims of the bewitched and frequently oversaw the prosecution of those who called others witches.⁶² Webster also solicited support from other prominent figures in the north of England who were firmly part of the restored establishment. In January 1674, for example, he wrote to his friend and fellow physician Martin Lister (1639–1712) at York, seeking his assistance in having his book on witchcraft licensed with the official stamp of the Royal Society. Lister, a religious conservative, was well connected in Anglican and proto-Tory circles, and would appear to have used his influence among fellow members in order to secure the approbation of some within the Royal Society for Webster's work.⁶³

MEDICINE, MADNESS, AND THE DECLINE OF WITCHCRAFT

As the example of John Webster suggests, medicine may have played an important role in shaping the scepticism of Tory magistrates and other loyal supporters of Church and state in the second half of the seventeenth century. Not surprisingly, some scholars have sought the source of such doubt in the new strains of medical thinking that were popularized in Europe from the sixteenth century onwards. Hugh Trevor-Roper and Thomas Jobe, for example, have both suggested a link between the decline of witchcraft and the growing popularity of occult medical systems based on the writings of men like Paracelsus and van Helmont, though with minimal success.⁶⁴ There was little that was intrinsically 'sceptical' in the works of these two physicians, who might as easily be cited by those situated on the 'credulous' side of the witchcraft debate. The ambiguous nature of the evidence is neatly captured in the case of the mid-century occult philosopher and translator of Paracelsus Robert Turner (1626–1665?), who within the space of just over a year shifted from credulous acceptance to outright scepticism with regard to the existence of witches and witchcraft.⁶⁵ Medical men, nonetheless, did play a prominent

⁶² Bodl., Rawlinson MSS C 948, 72; D 1137, 234, 241, 305. Slater and his colleagues on the bench were, like their northern counterparts, particularly active against the Quakers and other enemies of the state: see W. M. Palmer, 'The Reformation of the Corporation of Cambridge, July 1662', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, 17 (1912–13), 75–136.

⁶³ Bodl., Lister MS 34, fos 145, 147, 148, 157. The two men shared an interest in alchemy or mystical chemistry and lent each other books. For Webster's own wide reading, see Elmer, *Library of Dr John Webster*. For Lister, see especially A. M. Roos, *Web of Nature: Martin Lister (1639–1712), The First Arachnologist* (Leiden, 2011).

⁶⁴ T. H. Jobe, 'The Devil in Restoration Science: The Glanvill–Webster Debate', *Isis*, 72 (1981), 343–56. For criticism of this approach, including Jobe's suggestion that such rival natural philosophies reflected divergent religious positions (Anglican versus sectarian), see especially A. Coudert, 'Henry More and Witchcraft', in S. Hutton (ed.), *Henry More: Tercentenary Studies* (Dordrecht, 1990), 117–18.

⁶⁵ *Henry Cornelius Agrippa His Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy . . . Translated into English by Robert Turner* (London, 1655), A2r [dated 31 August 1654]; J. Angelus, *Astrological Opticks*, trans. R. Turner (London, 1656), unpaginated 'To the Reader' [dated 15 January 1655/6]. The *ODNB* errs in describing Turner as the Cambridge student born at Saffron Walden in Essex. He was born at Heckfield, near Holshot, in Hampshire in 1626, and was well connected, as his many prefaces infer,

role on the sceptical side in the debate over witchcraft, as the examples of John Cotta, Edward Jorden, Thomas Ady, and Robert Child (d. 1654) suggest.⁶⁶ Educated physicians, moreover, were widely considered by contemporaries to be temperamentally and intellectually disposed towards atheism and materialist philosophies of nature.

A more promising medical source for post-Restoration Anglicans averse to witchcraft can be found in the writings of the English physician Thomas Willis (1621–1675). As a young scholar and physician practising in interregnum Oxford, Willis worked tirelessly to sustain and promote support for the rites and liturgy of old-style Anglicanism, working alongside like-minded clergymen, some of whom, such as his friend and patron Gilbert Sheldon (1598–1677), were destined to play a major role in the restored Church after 1660. Shortly after the Restoration, Willis began to develop his own theories of bodily function based on a fusion of iatrochemical and iatromechanical ideas about the body informed by original anatomical and clinical observations. In the process, Willis' research, characterized by Robert Martensen as his 'brain project', was to produce a new template for investigating and understanding the human body based on the pre-eminence of the brain and the nervous system. Critically, according to Martensen, the success of the neurological revolution begun by Willis and carried forward by his many acolytes and followers was underpinned by its ability to both explain and contain those rebellious spirits in man, widely derided as a species of popular 'enthusiasm', which had threatened the equilibrium of the body politic in the 1640s and 1650s. At the same time, it excluded the possibility of diabolical possession or bewitchment as an explanation for a range of bodily symptoms (e.g. epilepsy or convulsion fits) that were now widely interpreted as 'natural' in origin.⁶⁷

to the local gentry of that area. His religious and political connections and comments suggest that he was distinctly hostile to Presbyterianism. A signatory of the petition designed to establish a Society of Chemical Physicians at London in 1665, he would appear to have used his royalist and Anglican connections to promote the cause of medical reform. I hope to discuss Turner's life and writings in greater detail in later publications. For birth and baptism, see J. Gadbury, *Collectio Geniturarum: Or, A Collection of Nativities, in CL Genitures* (London, 1662), 134; Hampshire Record Office, 27M79, PR3 [register of Heckfield, 1605–63].

⁶⁶ Some time in the 1640s, the young Cambridge student Thomas Plume (1630–1704) recorded in a notebook that one Dr Child was of the opinion that 'there are no witches nor possessed men'. While studying in Italy, he is said to have uncovered a fake demoniac. He later suggested that the symptoms of the possessed and bewitched were best explained by recourse to medical explanations including inflammation of the brain, madness, and melancholy. Robert Child (1612–1654), who graduated MD from Padua in 1638, was a prominent figure in the Hartlib circle with a strong interest in chemical medicine: *ODNB*, sub Child, Robert. Like Ady, he was a Presbyterian by background. Plume, who went on to establish a career in the Restoration Church, would appear to have shared Child's sceptical frame of mind: A. Rowlands, 'What Did Thomas Plume Think About Witchcraft? Reconstructing the Intellectual Outlook of a Little-known English Sceptic', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 2 (2011), 201–2.

⁶⁷ R. Martensen, '"Habit of Reason": Anatomy and Anglicanism in Restoration England', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 66 (1992), 511–35; R. Martensen, *The Brain Takes Shape: An Early History* (Oxford, 2004), 118–19, 135–44. Willis himself was careful not to exclude the possibility of diabolical witchcraft as a cause of disease in men and women. However, the broad thrust of his comments on the subject, elaborated in his work on convulsive diseases caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain, were aimed at exempting 'old women' from the cruel punishments of the law for witchcraft. Moreover, the

Willis' medical thinking undoubtedly owed an important debt to his attachment to traditional religious and political forms of belief. At the same time, his views may have helped to reshape the religious and political landscape of Restoration England by providing an explanatory, naturalistic model for all forms of dissident behaviour. In so doing, Willis was contributing to a wider discourse in which all forms of dissent were becoming subject to medical explanation, and religious extremism or 'enthusiasm' was increasingly depicted as a form of madness. In the process, Willis was forging a vital political role for the physician in late seventeenth-century England, one that many of his Anglican colleagues both inside and outside the Church welcomed with open arms.

The politicization of the medical 'profession' after 1660 took many forms.⁶⁸ In what follows, I suggest that it also played a critical role in shaping the way in which loyal Anglican physicians understood and interpreted a range of symptoms associated with witchcraft, which were subject to intense political manipulation and scrutiny in the aftermath of the Restoration. Willis himself was widely cited as an expert witness *in absentia* in the celebrated case of the Surey demoniac in 1690s Lancashire. The supposed possession or bewitchment of a young man named Richard Dugdale sparked a long and acrimonious exchange of opinions that, in the last resort, was primarily shaped by the respective religious affiliations of the combatants.⁶⁹ The exorcism of Dugdale, which had taken place in 1689–90, was first aired in the press in 1696 when a number of nonconformist ministers involved in the case sought to justify their actions and the reality of the boy's possession. A year later, Zachary Taylor (1653–1705), a local Anglican minister and rigid Tory, published a reply which included a letter written by a local physician, Dr John Ratcliffe (1663–1700), in which the 'profound Willis' was cited in order to prove beyond question that the boy was suffering from nothing more sinister than a form of 'Epilepsie joyn'd with Convulsions'.⁷⁰ Further confirmation of the importance of Willis in Tory-Anglican circles can be found in the correspondence of Taylor with his friend and clerical colleague Abraham de la Pryme (1671–1704), who in 1699 suggested that the success of hoaxes such as the Surey

danger of imposture and the relative rarity of the Devil's appearance 'on the stage' of human affairs inclined Willis to omit further discussion of the subject: T. Willis, *Pathologiae Cerebri* (Oxford, 1667), 90–1; T. Willis, *An Essay of the Pathology of the Brain and Nervous Stock: In which Convulsive Diseases are Treated Of*, trans. S. P. (London, 1681), 48–9.

⁶⁸ I hope to write more fully on this subject in future publications. In the meantime, it is worth noting the recent observation of the political historian Mark Knights, who has commented on the 'fascinating fusion' of natural philosophers, including physicians, and their shared anxiety concerning 'the rules governing public discourse and the meaning of words': Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation*, 57–62 [quote at 57].

⁶⁹ For discussion of this important case, see M. F. Snape, "'The Surey Impostor': Demonic Possession and Religious Conflict in Seventeenth-Century Lancashire', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 90 (1994), 93–114; J. Westaway and R. D. Harrison, "'The Surey Demoniac': Defining Protestantism in 1690s Lancashire', in R. N. Swanson (ed.), *Unity and Diversity in The Church* (Oxford, Studies in Church History, 32, 1996), 263–82.

⁷⁰ Z. Taylor, *The Surey Impostor: Being an Answer to a Late Fanatical Pamphlet, Entitled The Surey Demoniac* (London, 1697), 29–31. The physician in question, 'not much Inferiour to the great Man of that Name', was a medical graduate of Cambridge and practised at nearby Wigan: Venn, iii, 417.

demoniac could be imputed, among other things, to 'the great ignorance of most men in ye wonderfull power of many distempers', including madness and melancholy. Among those medical experts de la Pryme went on to cite to support such a view were Willis, Paracelsus, and van Helmont.⁷¹

Medical opinion also played a prominent role in the actual proceedings at Surey, and not surprisingly, perhaps, it split along partisan religious lines. Among those speaking for the dissenting interest was Robert Whitaker (d. 1704), a local physician with deep-rooted nonconformist credentials whom Taylor accused of deceit and acting in bad faith. His son Thomas (d. 1710) became a dissenting minister at Leeds. Samuel Jolly (1653–1691), an extra licentiate of the London College of Physicians, was the son of the local nonconformist minister Thomas Jolly (1629–1703), and was thus expected to side with his father. Finally, Robert Shepherd, whom Taylor erroneously described as 'the Leiden Dr', was dismissed as the stooge of another prominent figure among the Lancashire dissenting clergy, Henry Pendlebury (1626–1695). Doctor Edward Chew (1627–1706), on the other hand, whom Taylor lauded for curing the boy by natural means, was a pillar of the local Anglican establishment, many of whose descendants were to become madhouse keepers by the middle of the eighteenth century.⁷² Taylor's own motives, moreover, for becoming embroiled in this controversy may have owed something to local politics and his own precarious position as one who had recently dared to question the revolutionary settlement. Just a year before venturing into print, Taylor had fallen foul of the Whig authorities when he was accused of casting doubt on the authenticity of the recent plot to assassinate William III, as well as querying the merits of the loyalist 'Association' that was set up to defend the post-1688 settlement. Anticipating collusion between the new regime and the forces of organized Dissent, Taylor chose to subvert this fragile alliance by exposing nonconformist adherence to what he termed 'superstition and idolatry'.⁷³

The polarization of medical opinion along partisan lines in cases of bewitchment is also evident in other examples cited by Zachary Taylor. In another work on the Surey case, he thus cited the earlier example of a young boy from Leyland in Lancashire, who was widely believed to be suffering from a form of diabolical

⁷¹ C. Jackson (ed.), *The Diary of Abraham de la Pryme, the Yorkshire Antiquary* (Durham, Surtees Soc., 54, 1869), 199–200. In the same letter de la Pryme, a minister at Hull in Yorkshire, intimated an intention to publish his own thoughts on the case, but seemingly failed to do so. He was, as his diary makes clear, a lifelong sceptic in matters such as witchcraft and ghosts: *ibid.*, 4–5, 22–3, 39–42, 45, 56–7, 89. He also corresponded with the like-minded sceptic, fellow antiquarian, and High Church Anglican Dr Nathaniel Johnston (for whom, see below): *ibid.*, 192–6, 204–5.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 8, 19–20, 28–31, 36, 47, 57–8, 70, 73. For a thorough discussion of the medical personnel involved, see especially D. Harley, 'Mental Illness, Magical Medicine and the Devil in Northern England, 1650–1700', in R. French and A. Wear (eds), *The Medical Revolution in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1989), 131–40.

⁷³ LPL, MS 930, no. 26. This incident, which provoked a supportive letter from Taylor's bishop to Archbishop Tenison (28 March 1696), is omitted in the *ODNB* entry for Taylor. Taylor, it should be noted, was well connected to the family of the sceptical magistrate Sir Roger Bradshaigh (above). As curate of Wigan in 1695, Taylor preached the funeral sermon of Bradshaigh's widow: Z. Taylor, *The Death of the Righteous: Or, The Discriminating Circumstances that Favour the Departure of a Pious Soul* (London, 1695) [Wigan, 18 April 1695].

possession. The hero of the hour on this occasion turned out to be one of the foremost surgeon-physicians working in the county, Sylvester Richmond, who successfully diagnosed a range of natural causes and prescribed a variety of evacuative remedies 'by which means he thinn'd, dislodged and fetched away all that viscous matter that had caused the sad distemper'. Richmond was also a prominent and vociferous spokesman for the Tory cause in Lancashire, serving the port city of Liverpool as mayor in 1672–73 and dominating local politics for much of the early Restoration.⁷⁴ Lancashire, moreover, produced further such cases well into the early eighteenth century. In 1705, for example, it was widely reported that three young girls from Ormskirk had succumbed to possession at the hands of the Devil. The authorities, however, were not convinced, as the local vicar and a physician named Dr Hunter collaborated to promote a diagnosis of hysteria.⁷⁵

Political partisanship of the kind detected here in post-Restoration Lancashire, which infected religious, legal, and medical attitudes to witchcraft, is evident elsewhere in relation to a range of related phenomena. This is strikingly apparent, for example, in the case of the celebrated abstinent Martha Taylor, of Derbyshire, in 1668.⁷⁶ Here, it was not belief in the existence of witches that was at stake, but rather the feasibility of another type of preternatural phenomenon, extreme fasting, which some saw as a sign of the immediate agency of a providential God. Physicians again featured prominently in the ensuing debate. While the providential nature of Taylor's extraordinary fasting was upheld by the nonconformist physician-cum-preacher John Reynolds (1632–1683), his opponent, Nathaniel Johnston (1629–1705), was a physician who boasted impressive connections in High Church Anglican circles. Both men invoked the latest physiological and medical research to bolster their respective positions, with Reynolds in particular seeking to chart a middle way between 'enthusiasm' on the one hand, and outright incredulity on the other (see above, pp. 184, 202). Johnston, on the other hand, rigidly adhered to the view that Taylor's illness was nothing less than a fraud. We should not be surprised perhaps that when Johnston penned his authorized defence of divine right politics in 1686, much of which owed a large debt to the writings of Thomas Hobbes, he did so by rejecting, in typically Hobbesian fashion, all belief

⁷⁴ Z. Taylor, *The Devil Turn'd Casuist or the Cheats of Rome Laid Open* (London, 1696), B2r. For a brief overview of his medical and political career, see D. Harley, "'Bred Up in the Study of That Faculty": Licensed Physicians in North-West England, 1660–1760', *Medical History*, 38 (1994), 416–17.

⁷⁵ GRO, D3549/6/2/4 ['A True and Perfect Narrative of what Happen'd to Margaret, Charlott, & Ellen Daughter in Law, & daughters of Alexander Rawsthorne of Greepy Hill near Ormskirk' in a letter of Mr Kippax, vicar, to Edmund Entwistle, 1705]. The case is referred to in the diary of the Catholic gentleman Nicholas Blundell (1669–1737), who records seeing 'the three women that were said to be bewitched' at Ormskirk on 24 April 1705 (probably while attending the quarter sessions): J. J. Bagley (ed.), *The Great Diurnal of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire* (Liverpool, Lancashire and Cheshire Rec. Soc., 110, 112, 114, 1968–72), 3 vols, i, 83. The vicar in question, Archippus Kippax (d. 1718), succeeded Zachary Taylor as vicar of Ormskirk in 1692.

⁷⁶ For the ensuing pamphlet debate, see especially S. Schaffer, 'Piety, Physic and Prodigious Abstinence', in O. P. Grell and A. Cunningham (eds), *Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 1996), 171–203. For a further example of local sectaries championing the cause of Martha Taylor (uncited in Schaffer), see Bodl., Add. MS C305, fo. 292.

in portents and astrology. Echoing earlier loyalist declamations against such beliefs, he argued that:

Prophecies, Prodigies, and Prognostications are like Mercenary Souldiers, that may be listed to fight on any side; yet every Mans Superstition interprets them to his own advantage, or according to his wishes, hopes or fears. So that when the Designers have a mind to make impressions of fear on People they bring in some ill-boding Signs, as Apparitions, raining of Blood, Oxen speaking, Battles in the Air, and such like, to keep the People either in fear of Calamities, or in hopes of more prosperous times by changes.⁷⁷

Johnston's stance on witchcraft is not recorded. His attachment to the ideas of Thomas Hobbes, however, suggests that he would almost certainly have held profound reservations on the subject. The same was certainly true of another of Johnston's medical colleagues, John Northleigh (1657–1705), who published a polemical attack on Whig 'associators' in 1682. Comparing the Whigs, and their clubs, with those who signed the Solemn League and Covenant in the 1640s, Northleigh, in typical Tory fashion, invoked 1 Samuel 15:23, 'where Rebellion is made worse then the sin of Witchcraft, and altogether as much an Imp of Hell and the Devil'. Elsewhere, the sceptical potential of such a statement (the original biblical text equated rebellion with witchcraft) was more readily apparent, as, for example, in a disquisition upon the Whigs' appropriation of the phrase 'arbitrary power' which, Northleigh claimed, they used as a 'frightful Bugbear' to delude the general populace. He went on to explain how:

This terrible word Arbitrary, has much the same effect with the unintelligible and fearful dargon [sic] of Witches, of Juggling Devils, and Impostures in the Black Art; It charms the people into an inconsiderable horror and detestation of some persons, they know not why, nor wherefore; Suspends all the suggestions of reason and humanity, so long as the raging fit Exorcism endures; But when a little time has cool'd the possest Lunaticks into more sedate reflexion, and common sense, the motives to all this beastly rage are found very trifling, or quite false, and unaccountable'.⁷⁸

The medical roots of the scepticism displayed by physicians such as John Webster, Nathaniel Johnston, and John Northleigh is not always easy to discern and may have flowed from various sources. Johnston, for example, like Webster, was a 'modern', who was seemingly comfortable with many of the scientific advances of

⁷⁷ N. Johnston, *The Excellency of Monarchical Government, Especially of the English Monarchy* (London, 1686). In subsequent pro-government publications, Johnston was given privileged access to the official archives of the state in the Tower of London, and was clearly acting as an official mouthpiece of the fragile new regime of James II: *CSPD, 1686–1687*, 367; *CSPD, 1687–1689*, 14, 99.

⁷⁸ [J. Northleigh], *The Parallel: Or, The New Specious Association an Old Rebellious Covenant* (London, 1682), 7, 15. Northleigh may have had the contemporaneous trial of the Bideford witches at Exeter in mind when he wrote this section. Originally from Exminster, Devon, he later practised medicine in Exeter, and was almost certainly familiar with events surrounding the trial. Like Johnston, he did not recant his Tory ways under James II, continuing to write propaganda for the new regime, and was rewarded for his efforts in 1687 with a royal mandate for an MD from Cambridge University: *ODNB*, sub Northleigh, John; *CSPD, 1686–1687*, 352.

the Restoration. A keen botanist, chemist, and collector of rarities, he corresponded with fellow Yorkshire naturalist Martin Lister on a range of subjects, including experiments on spa waters, and carried out 'observations of the minuter parts of plants' with a microscope. He also demonstrated a singular interest in strange and difficult births, and was accounted something of a specialist in the field of midwifery in his native Yorkshire.⁷⁹ Northleigh, on the other hand, does not appear to have adopted such an enlightened approach to scientific and medical innovation. In the same work in which he appeared to cast doubt on the reality of witchcraft, he portrayed the disloyal Whig as a species of 'Protestant Virtuoso' who:

Views the slips of Government in a Microscope; and so magnifies the biting of a Flea, to the pinching of a Lobster; And for his transubstantiating of Metals, and Chymical Knacks, exceeds the Dutch van Helmont, or our English Boyle; with a little Panegyrick can Sublime a Knave to the very Quintessence of honesty; and then with one drop of the venom of his tongue, debase him to the worst of villains.⁸⁰

While Tory physicians may have disputed the relative merits of medical and scientific innovation, they nonetheless seem to have shared a common commitment to the idea of the primacy of the brain and the faculty of reason, emphasizing its crucial role in keeping in check the unruly passions which, in contemporary political debate, were widely construed as responsible for promoting sedition. In many respects, as Michael Hawkins has perceptively pointed out, 'beliefs about the ordering of the body politic' played a formative role in the research agendas of loyal physicians like Thomas Willis, reflecting their fear of the resurgence of popular insurrection, widely depicted in royalist propaganda as a form of madness, in the aftermath of the Restoration. Willis, according to Hawkins, believed that the 'dangerous passions and rebellious animal spirits' that threatened the stability of society required nothing less than constant vigilance on the part of those responsible for governing the nation. His concern for such matters was made evident by his use of the language of siege warfare and standing armies in describing the role of animal spirits in the human body. Imbalance in the flow of such spirits led inexorably to an 'intestine civil war' where subjects were ruled 'more by the whims of their passions than by the dictates of their reason'.⁸¹

Similar concerns may have informed the thinking of many of Willis' medical colleagues, who shared his religious and political convictions. George Castle (c.1635–1673), a member of the Oxford Experimental Club in the 1650s, was an early devotee of mechanism who, citing the recently published discoveries of Willis on the brain and nerves, argued firmly against the belief in witchcraft and

⁷⁹ ODNB; Bodl., Lister MS 35, fos 9–20, 36, 39; A. R. and M. B. Hall (eds), *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, 13 vols (Madison, WI, Milwaukee, WI, London, and Philadelphia, PA, 1965–86), ix, 281; x, 502–3; xi, 35; Horsfall Turner, *Nonconformist Register*, 62. Johnston was also an antiquarian and collector of coins, whose voluminous papers, spread across various archives, await detailed study.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 31.

⁸¹ M. Hawkins, "'A Great and Difficult Thing': Understanding and Explaining the Human Machine in Restoration England", in I. R. Morus (ed.), *Bodies/Machines* (Oxford, 2002), 15–38, esp. 22–9.

diabolical possession in 1667. Elsewhere in the same work, he likened the 'enthusiastic' extravagances of the chemical physicians to those of the interregnum sects, ignorance having become 'as necessary a qualification for the practice of Physick, as it is us'd to be for Preaching'.⁸² Humphrey Ridley (1653–1708), a skilled anatomist and disciple of Willis, who made numerous advances in contemporary understanding of the brain, echoed Castle's sceptical frame of mind when he claimed that the ancients ascribed all 'mystic' knowledge to superstition and witchcraft.⁸³ The search for anatomical clarity regarding the function of the brain was also responsible for provoking a growing debate in medical circles over the role of the passions in the human body. Among those who contributed to this debate was the eminent physician and physiologist Walter Charleton (1620–1707). Charleton, who was himself a long-term sufferer from mental illness that may have been triggered, or at the least exacerbated, by the execution of his former master Charles I in 1649, was the author in 1674 of a treatise that attempted to apply recent developments in physiology, including mechanistic assumptions about the body, to an understanding of man's unruly passions. These, it has been plausibly argued, owed much to Charleton's experience of the civil wars and found expression in his claim that the rational and sensitive souls vied for power on an equal footing in the body of man.⁸⁴ In later works, he did not shy away from intruding support for monarchical government into his medical and other writings. In 1680, for example, he took his former mentor Francis Glisson (c.1599–1677) to task over the issue of the neurological role played by the brain in causing motion in the limbs. Charleton claimed that Glisson had 'set up in the Brain a new Government by a kind of Duumvirate, the Regimen being divided betwixt the Will and natural Perception, so that neither of them can, without the assent of the other, excite any the least animal Motion'. The political sensitivity of his conclusion, published at the onset of the Exclusion Crisis, is unmissable: 'how unstable, how obnoxious to Divisions must that State be, that hath two Heads'.⁸⁵ Such thinking, indebted in

⁸² G. Castle, *The Chymical Galenist* (London, 1667), unpaginated 'epistle dedicatory', 8–9. In a digression on the 'hysterical passion', Castle sided with Willis, who argued for the primacy of the brain and nerves in explaining hysteria, in his controversy with fellow physician Nathaniel Highmore. Highmore (1613–1685), who shared Willis' passion for the new experimental philosophy, was equally committed to the restored Church and state. A royalist in the civil war, he served as a magistrate after 1660 in which capacity he was prominent as a persecutor of the Quakers and investigator of suspected plots: *ibid.*, 48–69; *ODNB*, sub Highmore, Nathaniel; Besse, *Collection of the Sufferings of the Quakers*, i, 169, 170; TNA, ASSI 24/22, fo. 164v. For Castle, see *ODNB*.

⁸³ H. Ridley, *The Anatomy of the Brain* (London, 1695), unpaginated 'introduction'; BL, Sloane MS 1502, fos 1–116. Research on the physiology of the brain was a preoccupation of a number of loyal Anglican physicians. Edmund King (1630–1709), like his mentor Willis a protégé of Archbishop Sheldon, spent his last years dissecting brains. Likewise, the staunch royalist and Anglican Sir Charles Scarborough (1615–1694), whose home in London became a refuge for 'distressed royalists' (including Hobbes) in the 1650s, later lectured on the anatomy of the brain. For King, see *ODNB*. For Scarborough, see *ODNB*; BL, Sloane MS 565, fos 1–20; W. Pope, *The Life of the Right Reverend Father in God Seth, Lord Bishop of Salisbury* (London, 1697), 18–19, 117; TNA, PC2/57, 174.

⁸⁴ A. Suzuki, "A Duumvirate of Rulers Within Us": Politics and Medical Pneumatology in Restoration England', in W. G. Marshall (ed.), *The Restoration Mind* (Newark, NJ, 1997), 111–31.

⁸⁵ SUL, HP 28/1/58A-B; W. Charleton, *A Natural History of the Passions* (London, 1674); W. Charleton, *Enquiries into Human Nature in VI. Anatomic Praelections in the New Theatre of the*

part to Charleton's immersion in anatomical research, may also account for his pronounced scepticism with regard to the place of spirit and spiritual phenomena in the natural world. According to Joseph Glanvill, Charleton was said to have 'laught att [the] Notion of Spiritts', something which he found incredible to ponder in a man who 'hath writ a booke of Immortality'. The taint of atheism, implicit in this comment, would appear to have dogged Charleton for the rest of his long life, if the nonconformist minister-cum-physician Henry Sampson is to be believed. By the 1690s the latter noted, on the information of his dissenting friend John Howe, that Dr Charleton was now fully debauched and 'given over to lewd and filthy discourse'.⁸⁶

In the eyes of men like Willis, Charleton, and many of their royalist colleagues, the preservation of order in the body politic, as in the natural body, was clearly a matter for the learned physician. Medical research, based on pioneering anatomical observation of the brain and nervous system, suggested above all that the madness and irrationality that they saw lying at the root of the nation's political troubles was amenable to diagnosis and cure. The pathologizing of the passions in this way may also have provided loyalist medics with an alternative, naturalistic explanation for those who claimed to suffer at the hands of witches, many of whom, as we have seen, were drawn from dissenting communities. In the period after 1660, the idea linking religious fanaticism or 'enthusiasm' with madness, which now had a firm medical foundation, was a recurrent theme in polemical treatises and sermons. Giles Duncombe, writing in 1660, had typically castigated the parliamentarians of the interregnum as 'bedlam fanaticks' and 'lunaticks'.⁸⁷ Thereafter, Anglican

Royal Colledge of Physicians in London (London, 1680), 514. For a recent 'biography' of Charleton that focuses on his self-image as a physician at the expense of a broader treatment of his political and natural philosophical outlook, see E. Booth, *'A Subtle and Serious Machine': The Medical World of Walter Charleton (1619–1707)* (Dordrecht, 2005). I remain unconvinced by Booth's depiction of Charleton as an eclectic thinker rather than a committed iatromechanist as well as her dismissal of his dualism, in which the body was depicted as a 'wonderful engine', as little more than an empty metaphor. Metaphors were rarely, if ever, value-free in Restoration England.

⁸⁶ Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, MS Misc. Eng. B2 275C [Glanvill to Henry More, 25 September 1668], as cited in S. Mandelbrote, 'The Uses of Natural Theology in Seventeenth-Century England', *Science in Context*, 20 (2007), 472; BL, Add. MS 4460, fos 69v–70r. Not surprisingly, some have identified the influence of Hobbes on Charleton: see, for example, N. Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Cambridge, 2002), 284; Booth, *'Subtle and Serious Machine'*, 16–17, 24.

⁸⁷ Cimgelgus Bond [i.e. Giles Duncombe], *Scutum Regale, The Royal Buckler, or Vox Legis, a Lecture to Traytors, who most Wickedly Murthered Charles the I* (London, 1660), 330. According to Bernard Capp, madness became 'a central trope in royalist writing after 1640': B. S. Capp, *England's Culture Wars: Puritan Reformation and Its Enemies in the Interregnum, 1649–1660* (Oxford, 2012), 78. The London MP and regicide Rowland Wilson (1613–1650), for example, was widely reported in the royalist press to have died stark mad, 'a lunatic revolter from loyalty'. In the same year, the prominent parliamentarian Thomas Hoyle (1587–1650) hanged himself after suffering a prolonged bout of melancholy, brought on, according to his enemies, by guilt over his role in the regicide: see A. Hughes, 'A "Lunatic Revolter from Loyalty": The Death of Rowland Wilson and the English Revolution', *History Workshop Journal*, 61 (2006), 192–204; ODNB, sub Hoyle, Thomas. The politicization of madness may even have pre-dated the civil war. In September 1640, Samuel Firmin of Colchester attempted, single-handedly, to destroy the altar rails at Colchester in Essex. The court records describe his actions as those of 'a man crazy in his brains'. However, Firmin and his wife had earlier been prosecuted in the church courts for refusing to receive communion at the rails, leading John Walter to suggest that his actions were more likely to have been political, 'the product of a

apologists repeatedly invoked such tropes in order to both understand and stigmatize their nonconformist opponents. For some, the mere act of attending a conventicle was widely construed as pathological, 'the Epidemick distemper of England', according to one loyalist preacher in 1682. The High Church Tory Edward Pelling (1640–1718) agreed: the dissenters were simply 'Seditious and Brain-sick People'.⁸⁸ Others, such as the Anglican apologist Samuel Parker (1640–1688), invoked more traditional humoral ideas that associated religious enthusiasm with melancholy—an association that had its roots in the pre-civil war period. Writing in 1670, Parker claimed that:

the fanatics derive all their religious motions and phantasms from the present state and constitution of their bodies, and move only upon the stage of Fancy, and according as sanguine or melancholy are predominant, so the Scene alters. Sometimes their blood runs low, their spirits are weak and languid, melancholy reeks and vapours cloud and overwhelm their Fancies, and then the Scene is all Tragedy, and they are immediately under *spiritual desertions* and trouble of Conscience.⁸⁹

Many more Anglican apologists echoed this approach and sought to explore the medical roots of 'enthusiasm' in which religious zeal, typically envisaged as a necessary adjunct of Dissent, was increasingly construed as a product of physical dysfunction, natural choler, and the passions. Those who fell under its spell were subsequently stigmatized as insane.⁹⁰ John Northleigh, for example, whom we have already encountered as sceptically inclined towards witchcraft, repeatedly depicted his Whig opponents as fools and madmen, 'who have almost an abstracted Idea of those things they rave for, imagine those Phrensies the real Objects of their deluded Opticks, which in truth are onely of their distempere'd

burdened conscience': J. Walter, 'Popular Iconoclasm and the Politics of the Parish in Eastern England, 1640–1642', *Historical Journal*, 47 (2004), 273.

⁸⁸ S. Crossman, *An Humble Plea for the Quiet Rest of God's Ark. In a Sermon Preached before Sir John Moore, Lord Mayor of the City of London* [5 February 1681/2] (London, 1682), unpaginated preface to the Reader; E. Pelling, *The Good Old Way, or, a Discourse Offer'd to all True-Hearted Protestants Concerning the Ancient Way of the Church and the Conformity of the Church of England Thereunto* (London, 1680), 7.

⁸⁹ S. Parker, *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie. Wherein the Authority of the Civil Magistrate over the Consciences of Subjects in Matters of Religion is Asserted* (London, 1670), 338. For Parker's pivotal role in articulating an Anglican rhetoric that emphasized the irrationality and 'enthusiasm' of Dissent, see Ashcraft, *Revolutionary Politics*, 41 and *passim*; D. Hirst, 'Samuel Parker, Andrew Marvell, and Political Culture, 1667–73', in D. Hirst and R. Strier (eds), *Writing and Political Engagement in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1999), 145–64. For further examples of such thinking, see G. Seignior, *God, the King, and the Church (to wit) Government Both Civil and Sacred Together Instituted . . . being the Subject of Eight Sermons* (London, 1670), 192–3.

⁹⁰ For the medicalization of 'enthusiasm' in early Enlightenment England, see especially M. Heyd, 'Be Sober and Reasonable': *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 1995), 191–210. Heyd is undoubtedly correct in foregrounding the role of the work of Thomas Willis in this process (*ibid.*, 195–6) but may have underestimated the extent to which such thinking permeated the discourse of Restoration divines and others in the period before 1700. For useful discussion of the political implications of the work of Willis, Charleton, and others *vis-à-vis* the passions and the contemporary fixation with 'enthusiasm', see A. Johns, 'The Physiology of Reading and the Anatomy of Enthusiasm', in O. P. Grell and A. Cunningham (eds), *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 1996), 136–70.

Intellectuals'.⁹¹ In similar fashion, the Tory pamphleteer John Nalson (1637–1686) referred to 'those Popular Insurrections of the Mind . . . the misled Passions' as the greatest danger to the welfare of the state given their propensity to overthrow reason, the 'King of the Soul'.⁹² Such thinking may also have shaped the response of medical men to actual instances of religious and political 'madness'. When the loyalist physician Thomas Novell (d. 1686) encountered Titus Oates in a London coffee house in 1681, at the time of the election of the Tory Sir John Moore as lord mayor, he immediately diagnosed the source of his impassioned rage as a form of madness and recommended a course of phlebotomy.⁹³ Madness and treason were widely perceived as natural bedfellows by defenders of the political status quo, and featured in various forms of literary and cultural media in the period, including the stage.⁹⁴ The incarceration of some political dissidents in Bedlam, such as the man who attempted to murder the duke of Ormonde in 1676, is also indicative of a growing propensity on the part of the authorities to envisage such crimes as the product of mental fallibility rather than spiritual or moral weakness. When a government informant, in the wake of the Rye House Plot, raved of 'his having been poisoned and bewitched by his enemies', Secretary Leoline Jenkins, on the orders of the King, promptly ordered that he be dispatched to Bedlam.⁹⁵

The pathologization of religious 'enthusiasm' and political dissent, accompanied by a growing interest in new ideas about the care and cure of the mad, has been seen as marking an important turning point in early modern attitudes to mental illness. Michael MacDonald, in his groundbreaking work on the subject, identified the emergence of specialized forms of care for the mad in private asylums and the abandonment of 'therapeutic pluralism' as primarily the

⁹¹ [Northleigh], *The Parallel*, 6, 11, 141. Elsewhere, Northleigh compared the Whigs to those who imagine 'dreadfull Appearances of Fiery Dragons, and strange Visions' but are in fact merely 'drunk and Lunatick': *ibid.*, 23.

⁹² J. Nalson, *The Common Interest of King and People: Shewing the Original, Antiquity and Excellency of Monarchy* (London, 1677), 3, 119. Elsewhere, Nalson invoked the spectre of witchcraft in order to denigrate the Presbyterians, citing 1 Samuel 15:23, as well as describing the case of an unnamed Huntingdonshire woman, who, claiming the gift of extempore prayer, was subsequently executed in New England for witchcraft: J. Nalson, *The Countermines: Or, A Short but True Discovery of the Dangerous Principles, and Secret Practices of the Dissenting Party, Especially the Presbyterians* (London, 1677), 59–60, 81–2, 94–5. The woman in question was Jane Hawkins (who was suspected, but not executed, for witchcraft at Boston in the late 1630s). Nalson's aim here and elsewhere was almost certainly to depict the pre-Restoration age as one in which puritanism went hand in hand with diabolism. In 1684, for example, he depicted Cromwell as a sorcerer and alluded to the 'witchcraft of such dangerous principles' as informing the motives of the regicides: J. Nalson, *A True Copy of the Journal of the High Court of Justice for the Tryal of King Charles I* (London, 1684), preface and Ev, aE2r.

⁹³ H. Bowler (ed.), *London Sessions Records 1605–1685* (London, Catholic Rec. Soc., 34, 1934), 344–5. Novell was granted a Cambridge MD by royal mandate in 1676 and was made a fellow of the College of Physicians in 1680: Venn, iii, 261; Munk, i, 402.

⁹⁴ Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation*, 279; A. Kaufman, 'Civil Politics–Sexual Politics in John Crowne's *City Politiques*', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700*, 6 (1982), 73–4.

⁹⁵ TNA, PC 2/65, 254, 486; CSPD, 1683–1684, 97–8. For the background to such a development, see J. Andrews, 'The Politics of Committal to Early Bethlem', in R. Porter (ed.), *Medicine in the Enlightenment* (Amsterdam, 1995), 64–112.

product of wider changes in society, especially religious conflict and political strife. By the end of the seventeenth century, he argued, political elites were rejecting 'traditional' explanations for mental illness, such as bewitchment, in preference for medical causes that were devoid of political connotations, or politically neutral.⁹⁶ More recently, Jonathan Andrews has charted the gradual application of such new ways of conceptualizing and treating the mad in the case of Bedlam Hospital. The appointment of Edward Tyson (1651–1708) as physician to Bedlam in 1684 marked an important turning point for the new therapeutic optimism. Tyson was decidedly a 'modern', who was widely respected in medical circles for his anatomical expertise and understanding of the latest developments in physiology. During his time as physician to London's only hospital for the mad, he introduced a range of medical interventions for the cure of the insane, including cold bathing, as well as pioneering a system of aftercare for patients on leaving the hospital.⁹⁷ Such developments, moreover, were not restricted to the capital city. The Plymouth surgeon James Yonge (1647–1721) was the author of a work in 1682 that loudly trumpeted the idea that injuries to the brain were curable. Yonge was a staunch Tory and prominent figure in the government of his local corporation, who combined a long medical career with a constant and deep-seated interest in the latest innovations in physiology and medicine.⁹⁸

This shift in attitude in medical circles to the problem of mental illness, which saw the emergence of a growing therapeutic optimism and the decline of the old-fashioned pluralism—best summed up by the phrase 'spiritual physic'—has also been detected at work in other parts of Europe. David Lederer, for example, on the basis of an in-depth study of early modern Bavaria, has recently argued for a paradigm shift in Europe about 1650 with respect to attitudes towards the mentally ill in which contested accounts of diabolism and witchcraft, and its cure, were increasingly replaced by new models of madness that were informed by medical and scientific innovation.⁹⁹ What is arguably missing from the accounts of both MacDonald and Lederer is a detailed description of how the wider political context informed such developments. For MacDonald, this is no great surprise as he was

⁹⁶ M. MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1981), 11.

⁹⁷ J. Andrews, 'Bedlam Revisited: A History of Bethlem Hospital, c. 1634–c. 1770', PhD thesis (Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, 1991), 249, 286–7, 289–90, 290–1, 305–6. In the absence of firm evidence, it is difficult to determine Tyson's religious and political allegiances. The son of a Cromwellian mayor of Bristol, he was related to a number of prominent figures in London's dissenting community, including his brother-in-law Dr Richard Morton (1637–1698), whom he remembered in his will. On the other hand, his appointment as physician to Bedlam in 1684—a moment of acute political sensitivity—as well as his friendship with senior Tory figures such as Lord Keeper Francis North (for whom, see above, 245–6)—suggests that he moved comfortably in establishment circles: see *ODNB*, sub Tyson, Edward; TNA, PROB 11/502, fos 333v–335v.

⁹⁸ J. Yonge, *Wounds of the Brain Proved Curable* (London, 1682); *ODNB*, sub Yonge, James.

⁹⁹ D. Lederer, *Madness, Religion and the State in Early Modern Europe: A Bavarian Beacon* (Cambridge, 2006).

primarily concerned with the period before 1640.¹⁰⁰ Lederer, on the other hand, suggests somewhat vaguely that the shift in attitudes towards possession and exorcism at the Bavarian court 'reflected mounting political distrust of metaphysical meddling in matters of state'.¹⁰¹ Such concerns, as I suggest here, played a crucial role in similar developments in England and would repay further study across other parts of Europe at this time.

ANGLICANISM, THE RESTORATION CHURCH, AND THE DEATH OF PROVIDENCE

The medicalization of a range of phenomena, including religious 'enthusiasm', bewitchment, and diabolical possession, which occurred after 1660 was in fact part of a much larger process which historians have variously described as 'desacralization', 'disenchantment', or 'secularization'. Common to them all was the idea of the death of providence. Despite an initial surge of interest in a range of providentialist occurrences in the immediate aftermath of the Restoration of Charles II, an event that was itself widely heralded as a 'miracle', the pattern thereafter is one of growing disinterest in such matters, especially among the ranks of the Anglican elite. The new mood is neatly captured in the comment of the royalist author of a rejoinder to the *Annus Mirabilis* pamphlets of the early 1660s, who in concluding this exchange called for an end to 'mis-applied providences'. After engaging in the normal tit-for-tat mud-slinging, the reader is informed that such accounts do little to establish the truth, but rather make it more difficult, being little more than 'Turkish or Cromwellian divinity to judge of the right of a Religion, by the lives or events of those that profess it'.¹⁰² Similar concerns permeate the polemical attack upon nonconformity launched by Richard Hollingworth (d. 1701), vicar of West

¹⁰⁰ In subsequent publications, MacDonald did, however, argue for the importance of political factors in promoting secular explanations for madness after 1660, emphasizing the role played by upper class fears of radical sectarianism or 'enthusiasm' in this process: M. MacDonald, 'Insanity and the Realities of History in Early Modern England', *Psychological Medicine*, 11 (1981), 11–25; M. MacDonald, 'Religion, Social Change, and Psychological Healing in England, 1600–1800', in W. J. Sheils (ed.), *The Church and Healing* (Oxford, Studies in Church History, 19, 1982), 101–25. The argument is echoed in the work of Roy Porter: see, for example, R. Porter, 'The Rage of Party': A Glorious Revolution in English Psychiatry?', *Medical History*, 27 (1983), 40.

¹⁰¹ Lederer, *Madness, Religion and the State*, 197–8. Lederer, unfortunately, provides no detailed analysis as to how or why this sea change in approach and attitude towards mental illness, or 'spiritual physic', took place at this particular moment. He does, however, make some tantalizing suggestions. Elsewhere, Lederer alludes to the role of religious zealotry, in the form of militant Jesuit groups at court, in spearheading the campaign against witches in Bavaria during the first half of the seventeenth century. When these threatened to spiral out of control and cause political embarrassment by mid-century, the authorities turned to more moderate policies and abandoned witch-hunting: *ibid.*, 240. Comparison with events in East Anglia in the 1640s (see Chapter 3) is difficult to avoid.

¹⁰² Anon., *An Anti-Brekekekex-Coax-Coax* (London, 1660), 8. In contrast, the staunch royalist Arise Evans condemned the 'lying wonders' of Henry Jessey, author of the *Annus Mirabilis* pamphlets, and concluded by asserting that 'there is abundance of Witches among the Sectaries', citing obliquely the case of the Sherborne Quakers indicted for witchcraft and devil worship: A. Evans, *To The Most High and Mighty Prince, Charles the II... An Epistle* (London, 1660), 56.

Ham, in 1676. There, he chided his dissenting opponents for consistently claiming that every extraordinary natural disaster, such as fire and plague, presaged disaster in the body politic: 'There cannot happen the least Ruffle or a Disorder upon Nature, but presently it is to give intimation of the wrongs and oppressions they are under, and to warn both the King and Bishops to treat them more gently for the time to come.' He went on to question the dissenters' claim to expert knowledge in this field (why might not ministers of the Church of England have equal access to the inner workings of divine providence?), as well as to pour scorn on their 'miracle-mongering', rejecting flatly any suggestion that they might 'alter the Course of Nature . . . change the essential Property of any thing [or] do great cures even by opposite and contrary Means, as our Saviour did'.¹⁰³ The idea that the age of miracles had ceased had been a constant refrain of the Anglican establishment from its inception. For many Restoration conformists, its demise was accompanied by a rejection of particular or special providences, which were increasingly subjected to ridicule and derision.

Such ideas permeated the ranks of the Anglican clergy after 1660. In a sermon preached to celebrate the victory of James II's forces over the Monmouth rebels in July 1685, Thomas Heyrick claimed that it was a common strategy of the Devil to 'buzz' men with 'Visions, Apparitions, Prophecies, and Alteration of Religion' in an attempt to draw them away from their allegiance to God and his vice-regent on earth.¹⁰⁴ In the same year, John Sharp (d. 1714), then dean of Norwich, preached a remarkable sermon at court in which he poured scorn on all attempts to verify and vindicate accounts of visions, apparitions, and ghosts in terms reminiscent of those used by witchcraft sceptics. According to Sharp, such evidence was never likely to be effectual in reforming men and making good Christians, for the 'bribed Understanding' of fallen man frequently proffered a range of explanations as to why he should not believe his own eyes in such cases:

For why might not all this be a meer delusion, the effects of a Melancholy Fancy, a Business wholly transacted on the Stage of the Imagination? That he had such an Apparition, and that he was horribly frighted with it, he cannot doubt: But whether this Apparition was really presented to his outward Senses, and was not onely the Fiction of his own heated and disturbed Brain, he thinks he hath reason to doubt . . .

¹⁰³ R. Hollingworth, *A Modest Plea for the Church of England* (London, 1676), 51–2. For Hollingworth's career, and later involvement in the controversy surrounding the authorship of *Eikon Basilika*, see *ODNB*. In 1682, the Yorkshire gentleman Ralph Thoresby recorded listening to a sermon at Stockton-on-Tees in Durham where the vicar 'shewed how apt we are to fear such things as are seldom observed', such as natural events like eclipses and thunder and lightning, but how rarely, if ever, they induce admiration for God. He then went on to contrast these common occurrences with comets and apparitions, and the 'strange effects they have upon vulgar apprehensions', concluding with 'a lash or two at the poor Dissenters . . . under the name of Presbyterians': J. Hunter (ed.), *The Diary of Ralph Thoresby*, *F. R. S.*, 2 vols (London, 1830), i, 142.

¹⁰⁴ Heyrick, *Character of a Rebel*, 13. In the same sermon, Heyrick alluded to Exodus 22:18 and 1 Samuel 15:23: *ibid.*, 6. A few months earlier, he had used a sermon to celebrate the proclamation of James II as an opportunity to compare those who struck at God by fighting against their king to witches who 'kill by Effigie'; T. Heyrick, *A Sermon Preached at Market Harborough* [17 February 1685] (London, 1685), 13, 22.

How many People meet with Goblins in their Night-walks, and see Armies fighting in the Air . . . When as in truth the one is nothing but Trees; and the other, but Clouds formed into such shapes by the power of their Imagination. How many Persons in Feverish Distempers see plainly Fiends and Devils standing at their Beds-seat? But yet none is so simple as to believe these to be Realities.¹⁰⁵

Similar doubts were expressed by Robert Dixon (d. 1688), vice-dean of Rochester and strident opponent of nonconformity, in a sermon preached at Rochester in December 1680. There, he gave vent to a protracted disquisition on the erroneous nature of the prodigious, under which label he included monsters, ghosts, comets, blazing stars, unclean spirits, and witches. In similar fashion, he rejected astrology, poking fun at those who had failed to predict the restoration of Charles II, and concluded by arguing that 'Witches, Comets, Polices [sic], Lyes of all sorts, even unto death, shall not plague us into despair.' He also claimed, echoing Hobbes, that magic and sorcery were an invention of the gentiles.¹⁰⁶ To what extent such churchmen drew on the growing interest in the new strains of natural philosophy, particularly those that emphasized the regular and orderly nature of causation in the world, is open to debate. Certainly many of the new generation would have encountered such beliefs in Oxford and Cambridge after 1650 and some, particularly those of a latitudinarian inclination, were increasingly receptive to elements of the new mechanical world-view as espoused by Descartes and his followers (see Chapter 5). Such thinking, however, may also have permeated the wider ranks of the Restoration Church. John Lambe, for example, was at pains to remind his audience in 1682 that 'there is nothing either New or Strange, that almost all events are the proper effects of common causes, agreeable to the nature of things, the oeconomy of the world, and the Liberty of agents, and all disposed to the good will and pleasure of a Supreme agent'.¹⁰⁷ There was little room in such a world-view for special providences of the kind that were so enthusiastically welcomed and promoted by dissenters and papists alike. Rather than wait on God to intervene in human affairs and punish evildoers, a new generation of Anglican ministers was

¹⁰⁵ J. Sharp, *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall, in Lent* [20 March 1685] (London, 1685), 24–6. Sharp's sentiments echo those found in an earlier sermon preached by his High Church colleague Francis Turner (1637–1700), who compared the delusionary states of the crown's opponents to the 'lethargic dreams or Mortal trances such, as they say, Witches are cast into when the Devil abuses their Phancies with a Scene of Feasting and Revelling': F. Turner, *A Sermon Preached Before the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen* [London, 7 May 1682] (London, 1682), 25. Sharp, as archbishop of York, was later bombarded by his friend Edward Fowler, bishop of Gloucester, with various accounts of apparitions, miracles, prophecies, and witchcraft, perhaps in a concerted attempt to change his opinion on such matters; see above, 219–20. For the age-old debate over the faulty nature of human vision, and its impact upon demonological discussion of visions, apparitions, and ghosts, see especially S. Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford, 2007), 204–35.

¹⁰⁶ R. Dixon, *A Sermon Preached on the Fast Day. December 22. 1680. In the Cathedral Church of Rochester* (London, 1681), 12–17, 19. The entry for Dixon in the ODNB suggests that he was the author of the Hudibrastic verse satire, *Canidia, or, The Witches. A Rhapsody. In Five Parts* (London, 1683). The mocking, burlesque tone of the work is fully in keeping with Dixon's sentiments, as described above.

¹⁰⁷ J. Lambe, *A Sermon Preached, Before the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen, at the Guildhall-Chapel* [5 February 1682] (London, 1682), 29.

increasingly active in urging the magistrate to take the lead in such matters. The new mood was perfectly captured in the sermon that William Sancroft (1617–1693), future archbishop, preached before the House of Lords in 1678 when he warned that:

We must not presume to use our Lord, as Herod did; call for him, when we please, to work us a fine Miracle; neglect our Affairs, and leave them embroyl'd, and ruffled on purpose, that he may come down . . . to disentangle them. The glory of God descends not visibly now adays upon our Palaces, as of old . . . Nor doth the Earth swallow up Rebels and Traitors alive. 'Tis a Scepter of ordinary Justice, not a Rod of Wonders, that fills the Hand of our Governours. We must not expect that a good Cause should work alone of it self by way of a Miracle.¹⁰⁸

There were, of course, other potential sources for Anglican ministers to draw upon, in addition to the new strains of medical and scientific thinking, in order to undermine the idea of an active deity regularly intervening in the affairs of humankind. The spectre of Thomas Hobbes, in particular, cast a long shadow over Restoration Britain. Loudly condemned and disparaged by men of all religious and political affiliations, it is nonetheless difficult to avoid the conclusion that Hobbes' unique and forensic examination of the roots of human nature and its effect on the body politic had a profound effect on many contemporaries, despite their understandable unwillingness to acknowledge the same. Anthony Wood famously asserted that Hobbes had 'corrupted half the gentry of the Nation', and others empathized. As early as 1661, the loyal minister Thomas Reeve (d. 1672) was blaming the current fashion for anti-providentialism in loyal circles on the gentry, astrologers, chemists, learned physicians, and 'many of our hobbling Divines'.¹⁰⁹ More often than not, those who echoed Hobbes' rejection of a providential, divine plan in the world of man and nature were forced at the same time to disavow Hobbes' anticlericalism and its impact upon the gentry.¹¹⁰ The ambivalent reaction to Hobbes among the conformist clergy is evident, for example,

¹⁰⁸ W. Sancroft, *A Sermon Preach'd to the House of Peers . . . being the Fast Day Appointed by the King* [13 November 1678] (London, 1678), 26. Preached in the wake of the revelations surrounding the Popish Plot, the whole sermon is a call for government action against the threat posed by the Jesuits to the stability of the kingdom. Typically, Sancroft invoked the language of exorcism, arguing that words and laws were insufficient and that 'there is another and a better *Flagellum Daemonum*, than that of Hieronymus Mengis, and his fellow Exorcists', namely the use of force: *ibid.*, 26–7. The Franciscan friar Girolamo Menghi (1529–1609) was the author of a series of manuals that constituted the standard procedures and protocols for conducting exorcisms in the post-Tridentine Roman Catholic Church.

¹⁰⁹ A. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, 2 vols (London, 1691–92), 287, 483; T. Reeve, *The Man of Valour, or the Puissance of Englands Great Champion. Delivered in Three Sermons, in the Parish Church of Waltham Abbey, upon Duke Albemarle's Coming Up to London, and declaring for a Free Parliament* (London, 1661), i, 70. In the same sermon, Reeve insinuated that the rulers of the interregnum had consulted magicians, having taken 'these men of the black art for their privy Counsellours and familiar spirits'. He also lamented the manner in which language had become corrupted and meaning inverted in the same period, it being a 'merry Age for Nicknames': *ibid.*, ii, 71–2, 110. For Reeve, see also Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist*, 120.

¹¹⁰ Hollingworth, for example, blamed the gentry, 'especially those who have swallowed down the principles of Mr Hobbs', for the current, parlous standing of the clergy. They did so for fear 'the clergy should overtop them, or at least encroach too much upon their Power, and influence in those

in the writings of the religious controversialist Samuel Parker, who, in debate with the dissenters, was accused by them of denying, along with Hobbes, the innate rationality of man and the latter's inability to discern the difference between good and evil.¹¹¹ Occasionally, the influence of Hobbes can also be seen in the public declarations of loyal clergy at critical political moments, such as those expressed by William Baron (d. 1714) at the Abingdon assizes in August 1683. Preaching in the wake of the Rye House conspiracy, Baron argued that it was man's innate self-interest that lay at the heart of social and political life, who 'will naturally make that the ultimate end of all his undertakings, whatever other obligations may lie upon him from the dictates of right reason, or the compacts of humane society engage him into'. He went on to argue that the body politic was thus an 'artificial' body, 'made up of so many different Tempers and Constitutions, Humours, Interests, and Designs, that like other curious Compositions, every unhappy jog, every rough hand, or foul breath, is liable to disorder, if not quite destroy it'.¹¹² Not surprisingly, perhaps, given the long-standing reputation of medical men for atheism, such ideas also proved appealing to many loyal physicians. The Tory Nathaniel Johnston, for example, whom we have already encountered as holding pronouncedly sceptical views on a range of preternatural phenomena, thus incorporated Hobbes' mechanistic account of the body politic into his own defence of divinely ordained monarchy in 1686.¹¹³

Hobbes' influence on the medical profession is difficult to discern with any degree of certainty, but is probably best seen as an important contributory element to a broader ideological debate surrounding the legacy of Cartesian dualism in medical circles. In England, the work of Francis Glisson, Walter Charleton, Thomas Willis, and William Coward helped to erode belief in various aspects of traditional Christian thinking, including the immateriality and immortality of the human soul as well as the idea of an ever-present and constantly active, providential deity.¹¹⁴ Such men, in turn, would appear to have fed and encouraged the 'Hobbling

Countrys where they live'. In the same breath, he went on, in typical Hobbesian fashion, to laud the clergy as a bulwark of order in the state: Hollingworth, *Modest Plea*, 56, 60–2.

¹¹¹ Ashcraft, *Revolutionary Politics*, 48–52. See also J. G. A. Pocock, 'Thomas Hobbes: Atheist or Enthusiast? His Place in a Restoration Debate', *History of Political Thought*, 11 (1990), 737–49. Likewise, Matthew Wren (1629–1672), the son of a bishop, employed Hobbesian arguments in debate with the political philosopher James Harrington in the late 1650s: see W. C. Diamond, 'Natural Philosophy in Harrington's Political Thought', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 16 (1978), 395.

¹¹² W. Baron, *Demetrius and the Crafts-men. A Sermon Preach'd at the Berkshire Assizes held in Abingdon* [7 August 1683] (London, 1683), 1–2. Baron was a product of Caius College, Cambridge, where he was a fellow in the 1660s. He later served as rector of Hampstead Marshall and Enbourne in Berkshire for over forty years: Venn, i, 96.

¹¹³ Johnston, *Excellency of Monarchical Government*, 1–5.

¹¹⁴ On this under-explored area, see especially J. Henry, 'The Matter of Souls: Medical Theory and Theology in Seventeenth-Century England', in R. French and A. Wear (eds), *The Medical Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1989), 87–133; A. Thomson, *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2008), 65–95. For Glisson, see J. Henry, 'Medicine and Pneumatology: Henry More, Richard Baxter, and Francis Glisson's *Treatise on the Energetic Nature of Substance*', *Medical History*, 31 (1987), 15–42. For Charleton, an avid reader of Hobbes, who was probably overlooked for membership of the College of Physicians on account of his Hobbism, see above, 258–9.

gentry' to engage in similar speculation surrounding active matter and related attempts to undermine the place of spirit in the material world. The Yorkshire gentleman and 'atheist' Henry Layton (1622–1705), for example, who denied the immortality of the soul, was an avid reader of Willis' work on the brain and shared his belief in a 'flamey soul'.¹¹⁵ Layton, for his part, denied (somewhat unconvincingly) ever having read Hobbes, but others most certainly did. Among Hobbes' earliest converts were his patron William Cavendish (1593–1676), the duke of Newcastle, and his wife Margaret (1623–1673), both of whom expressed a radical indifference bordering on outright scepticism with regard to conventional notions of witchcraft. Witchcraft for the duke was a thing 'indifferent', a kind of adiaphora, 'for in such cases men may discourse and argue as they please, to exercise their Wit, and may change and alter their Opinions upon more probable Grounds and Reasons'. His wife, while developing her own original take on Hobbes' materialism, shared her husband's incredulity. During the early 1650s, in the wake of the execution of Charles I, she depicted the country as ruled by politic witches and wizards, and cited a 'rational Lord' (probably her husband) as decrying the punishment of 'all women that are poore, old, and ill-favoured' for witchcraft.¹¹⁶ Other loyal courtiers seem to have shared such sentiments. Lady Elizabeth Livingston, later Delaval, the daughter of the loyalist earl of Newburgh (d. 1670) and a maid of the privy chamber to Catherine of Braganza, may well have fallen under the spell of Hobbes when she declared that belief in witchcraft was a product of human ignorance or fallibility. Likewise, Sir William Temple (1628–1699), a devotee of Montaigne, heaped praise on Meric Casaubon's *Treatise Concerning Enthusiasm* (1656), which he hoped would inspire others to give a 'clear Account of Enthusiasm and Fascination, from their Natural Causes', and in the process 'save the Lives of many innocent, deluded, or deluding People, who suffer so frequently, upon Account of Witches and Wizards'.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Thomson, *Bodies of Thought*, 99–100, 102. Layton was answered by the nonconformist physician-cum-minister Timothy Manlove in his *The Immortality of the Soul, Asserted and Practically Improved* (London, 1697). For Manlove (d. 1699), who briefly succeeded Richard Gilpin at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, see above, 201n.

¹¹⁶ M. Cavendish, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High and Puissant, Prince William Cavendish, Duke, Marquess, and Earl of Newcastle* (London, 1667), 144–5; M. Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies* (London, 1653), 108–9, 120, 163–4, 181, 203–4; 210–11; *Letters and Poems in Honour of the Incomparable Princess, Margaret, Dutchess of Newcastle* (London, 1676), 137–42. The latter comprises Margaret Cavendish's interchange of views on witchcraft with Joseph Glanvill, who tried to convince her of the error of her sceptical ways. For discussion of this, and Cavendish's approach to such matters, see especially J. Broad, 'Science, Religion, and Witchcraft', *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science*, 38 (2007), 493–505; L. Walters, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Science and Politics* (Cambridge, 2014), 101–10.

¹¹⁷ D. G. Greene (ed.), *The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval. Written between 1662 and 1671* (Gateshead, Surtees Soc., 190, 1978), 78–9; W. Temple, *Miscellanea. The Second Part. In Four Essays* (London, 1690), iv ('On Poetry'), 6–7, 43. For the staunch Anglican Temple, see ODNB. Temple, of course, was being highly selective in his citation of Casaubon, a figure who represents one of the few examples of a High Church Anglican minister willing to publicly acknowledge his faith in traditional notions of witchcraft and the existence of spirits after 1660. Casaubon, moreover, was arguing as early as 1656 that it was physicians and 'naturalists' who were most inclined towards scepticism in such matters: M. Casaubon, *A True and Faithful Relation of What Passed for Many Years between Dr John Dee and Some Spirits* (London, 1656), Cv. For the political motives behind Casaubon's writings on witchcraft and

Quite how, and to what extent, the scepticism of gentlemen scholars, physicians, and clergymen filtered down to the rest of Restoration society remains an open question. Treatises on witchcraft and publications such as the *Athenian Mercury* (1691–97) clearly played their part in stimulating a public debate on matters such as witchcraft, apparitions, and related phenomena. Equally important were new venues, such as coffee houses, which provided a vital arena for the discussion of a range of subjects, including witchcraft, in an emerging 'public sphere'. Clubs, associations, and societies, such as the Royal Society and the College of Physicians in London, may also have played their part. The principal conduit for the transmission of such ideas, however, almost certainly remained the sermon, which, as I have suggested in this chapter, constitutes a useful barometer to gauge changing attitudes to the preternatural and divine providence in the period after 1660. Where, though, did Restoration clergymen, particularly those who conformed and supported the hierarchy in the war against Dissent, imbibe the new ideas that promoted a growing distrust or dismissal of the preternatural? Here, the answer surely lies in the formative sphere of education, in particular the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, where future clergymen were first exposed to the new currents of medical and natural philosophical speculation. Restoration Cambridge, for example, has been demonstrated to have played an important role in promoting the 'new science', including Cartesian mechanism.¹¹⁸ These new currents of thought clearly played their part in providing the intellectual ballast for Anglican scholars and clergymen to argue for a diminished role for a providential deity. But they alone cannot fully explain how this process came about. Ideas do not exist in a vacuum. They are prompted and shaped, discussed and disseminated, in a world of social, religious, and political imperatives. Here, I have foregrounded the 'political', arguing that the spread of scepticism with regard to phenomena such as diabolical witchcraft in Anglican circles after 1660 was essentially forged in the white heat of conflict with dissident voices in the restored body politic. This was a process, moreover, that did not end in 1688 with the defeat of James II and the Stuarts, but continued apace after the Glorious Revolution and into the 'age of party'. However, as was commonly the way with witchcraft, it did not follow an entirely predictable path, as I hope to demonstrate in the final chapter.

related phenomena, and his attempt to depict the inspiration of the Quakers and other radicals as a form of diabolical possession, see I. Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations c.1650–c.1750* (Oxford, 1997), 55–69; S. Clucas, 'Enthusiasm and "Damnable Curiosity": Meric Casaubon and John Dee', in R. J. W. Evans and A. Marr (eds), *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Aldershot, 2006), 131–48.

¹¹⁸ See especially J. Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of Enlightenment: Science, Religion and Politics from the Restoration to the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1989), 52–68. I am currently researching, as part of a Wellcome-funded project on 'The Medical World of Early Modern England, Wales and Ireland, c. 1500–c. 1715', the social, religious, and political networks of Cambridge medical graduates in the period after 1650. Early findings suggest that relations between medical and clerical students were close, with both sharing a common interest in their respective fields of study. This may in part reflect the fact that many Anglican students opted to study medicine in the 1650s as an alternative to divinity and the pursuit of a clerical career under puritan rule. It is equally apparent that many post-Restoration clerics were well versed in the latest medical developments in anatomy and chemistry, which they often cited in their sermons and discussed with their medical colleagues. I hope to publish my findings in due course.

7

Witchcraft, Enthusiasm, and the Rage of Party The Politics of Decline in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England

Things are denominated Heresie and Atheism, not by any Certain Rules of Truth or Falsehood, but according to the Caprice, or Interests of Sects and Parties.

L. P., *Two Essays Sent in a Letter from Oxford to a Nobleman in London. The First Concerning Some Errors about the Creation, General Flood, and the Peopling of the World. The Second Concerning the Rise, Progress and Destruction of Fables and Romances* (London, 1695), ii–iii

THE LAST WITCHFINDERS

The demise of witch trials in the final quarter of the seventeenth century was not accompanied by a similar decline in belief in the reality of witchcraft, demonic possession, and a host of related ideas. On the contrary, there is ample evidence to suggest that at many levels, both popular and elite, Englishmen and women continued to accuse their neighbours of witchcraft as well as push for some form of legal or quasi-judicial remedy for such acts of diabolism. In the face of growing reluctance among magistrates and judges to pursue such cases, the afflicted frequently resorted to lay healers, many of whom claimed a special dispensation with regard to the detection of witches. In many respects, such men were the heirs of a long-established tradition in which local wise men sought to alleviate the strange and inexplicable sufferings of their neighbours. By the end of the seventeenth century, moreover, some were even harnessing the power of the printing press in order to advertise their skills to a wider public and thus establish lucrative careers as witchfinders.

Among those who published accounts of their cures of the possessed and bewitched were the astrological doctors John Skinner and Richard Kirby. Skinner operated in the home counties, especially Kent and Sussex, where he used a combination of prayer and natural medicines in order to exorcize devils. In 1681, he published a detailed account of the dispossession of a young maid, Margaret Gurr, of Tonbridge in Kent, as well as that of a man from nearby Hadlow who

claimed to be possessed by the Devil in the shape of a greyhound.¹ A few years later, another 'student in physic and astrology', Richard Kirby, published an account of his successful cure of a possessed maid, Sarah Bower of Wapping in Middlesex, to which he added an appendix listing a whole series of similar cures performed while he was in political exile in Norfolk in 1687–88.² Kirby was an outspoken defender of the Whig cause who almost certainly sought refuge in East Anglia in order to avoid prosecution at the hands of political rivals such as the leading Tory astrologer John Gadbury (1627–1704). Interestingly, the rivalry and debate between the two astrologico-political camps mirrored precisely the different approaches taken by Whig and Tory physicians to the subject of bewitchment and demonic possession (as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6). Kirby, as we shall see, had a soul mate in the form of the radical Whig physician William Boreman or Burman, while loyalist stargazers like Gadbury consistently rejected diagnoses of witchcraft, preferring to argue that witches and their victims were either mad, deluded, or frauds. Like many of his Tory colleagues in mainstream medicine, he also envisaged witchcraft as a by-product of religious enthusiasm.³

Not surprisingly, the fate of astrology, like witchcraft, to which it was so closely connected, was in large part shaped by the polemical debates of the first age of party.⁴ In the aftermath of the Rye House Plot of 1683, the rebel-cum-turncoat Robert West confessed that there was nothing his accomplices would not do, or invoke, in order to make proselytes to the cause, including the use of 'superstitious', 'credulous', and 'foppish arts' such as astrology and prophecy. These, he claimed, were 'buzz'd into their heads, and interpreted to their humour, & they were told that all the Astrologers (even Gadbury himself) were of their side [and] that the stars were perfect Whiggs'. West, in particular, was keen to incriminate the astrologer John Partridge (1644–1715), who, he claimed, excused himself from taking part in a plot to assassinate Charles II on the grounds that he was unable to ride a horse. He nonetheless informed his fellow conspirators that he had calculated the duke of York's nativity, 'and found he would not outlive March or Aprill, and that the King was under an ill Direction, and the people would be victorious, so infallibly obliging an Art is Astrology, as to accommodate itself to the humor of the Credulous'.⁵ After 1683, much of the government's energies during the years of

¹ J. Skinner, *A Strange and Wonderful Relation of Margaret Gurr of Tunbridge in Kent* (London?, 1681?). Skinner was based at Westerham in Kent, but had formerly been resident at Shipley in Sussex, where he had been licensed to practise medicine and surgery in the diocese of Chichester in 1679. He was issued with a new licence for the whole of the province of Canterbury a year later: LPL, FII/21/86a–c.

² R. Kirby, *Dreadful News from Wapping* (London, 1693). For Kirby's career and publications, in which he defended himself from the charge that astrology was a form of witchcraft that encouraged atheism, see the article by Bernard Capp in *ODNB*.

³ J. Gadbury, *ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΣ; or, A Diary Astronomical and Astrological for the Year of Grace 1679* (London, 1679), C8v.

⁴ For the politicization of astrology in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, see especially P. Curry, *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1989) and D. Woodcraft, 'A "Politick Engine": Astrology and Politics 1678–1715', PhD thesis (Warwick, 1997).

⁵ BL, Add. MS 38,847, fos 97v, 105r–v.

Tory reaction were focused on Holland, where large numbers of Whigs then sought refuge. Here, government spies continued to report the gullibility of rebel exiles, who, it was claimed, frequently resorted to astrological advice in order to bolster morale or gain a political edge over their enemies.⁶ John Partridge, not surprisingly, figured prominently in this respect, having removed to Holland after the accession of James II in 1685.⁷ Providential visions also played their part. In March 1686, for example, it was being reported in Amsterdam that the rebels there intended to publish a relation of 'a certain Vision of an Angell appearing to an honest man in ye west of England wherin he presumes to prognosticate some more bloodshed & action in Engl[and] this year, & of ye Restitution of a right heir to his own'.⁸ Many of these themes—witchcraft, visions, and party politics—were also to inform the extraordinary life and career of one of the last of England's witch hunters, William Boreman.

In 1727, Daniel Defoe, in a work devoted to exploring the role of the supernatural in contemporary English society, recalled an encounter with a Dr Boreman, a Kent doctor and sorcerer, who claimed a special expertise in the detection of witches. In Chapter 5, I identified this man as a real doctor and no figment of Defoe's admittedly fertile imagination, and attempted to recreate his career and its fascinating fusion of radical politics with a firm belief in the reality of witchcraft and demonic possession. In many respects Boreman's career, like that of Matthew Hopkins, fits the historiographic stereotype of the witch hunter as religious fanatic. At the same time, it also echoes the early Enlightenment construct of the witch-obsessed 'enthusiast'. Boreman was in fact one of the founder members of the Philadelphian Society, set up in the early 1680s by the mystical prophet Jane Leade (1624–1704) following the death of the English Behmenist John Pordage (1607–1681). In 1683, he was responsible for helping to finance and publish Pordage's manifesto for the new religious movement, one that critically sought to position itself within, not outside, the established Church.⁹ While there is insufficient space here to discuss fully Boreman's role in the Philadelphian Society, or the place of the latter within the religious history of the period, I would like to

⁶ See, for example, the case of a member of the family of the prominent Whig exile Sir John Thompson, who was said to have consulted a 'High German who hath the character of the English Doctor' and pretended to 'tell fortunes and resolve questions'. He apparently advised that if Sir John returned to England, he would be secured and not return; BL, Add. MS 41,818, fo. 256r.

⁷ For Partridge and his subversive activities in Holland, see especially BL, Add. MS 41,813, fos 19, 21–7, 28r–43v, 47v, and the account by Patrick Curry in *ODNB*.

⁸ BL, Add. MS 41,818, fo. 280v. The Whigs' fascination with such stories was almost certainly not a Tory fabrication: see my earlier discussion of Whig providentialism, including comets, above, 180–2.

⁹ J. Pordage, *Theologia Mystica, or the Mystic Divinitie of the Æternal Indivisible* (London, 1683), where Boreman is alluded to as W. B., physician, of Wilmington in Kent. In 1684, John Pordage (c.1635–1688), the physician son of John Pordage the mystic, appeared as a witness for Boreman in the Court of Arches; LPL, D324b, fos 65r, 139v–140r, 253v–256r. He would appear to have been acting as an agent on Boreman's behalf in an attempt to secure some of the latter's lost papers, which, if they fell into the wrong hands, might prove politically dangerous and incriminating. For this case, and Boreman's frequent brushes with the authorities sparked by his outspoken and subversive political opinions, see above, 198–200.

emphasize various elements of Boreman's story that underpin a number of issues which I have raised elsewhere in this book.

In the first place, it is worth stressing that Boreman was a medical doctor, as was his mentor Pordage and so many others of Pordage's disciples, including Francis Lee (1661–1719) and Edward Hooker (d. 1707), the latter supplying an introduction and copious notes to Pordage's *Theologia Mystica*. Pordage himself, like many nonconformist ministers, combined medicine with pastoral duties, purveying a form of 'spiritual physic' that was clearly informed by his reading of authors such as the Silesian mystic Jacob Boehme (1575–1624).¹⁰ Boreman, as the records of his Court of Arches case suggest, may well have followed in Pordage's footsteps, dispensing a curious amalgam of physical and spiritual remedies for those under his care. Unlike, however, those dissenting ministers who pursued a double career outside of the established Church, Boreman and his Philadelphian colleagues do not appear to have rejected membership of the restored Church. Instead, they proposed an eirenic resolution of ecclesiastical division and conflict, millennial in character, which they hoped to achieve by remaining in communion with the Anglican Church. This in turn meant that the Philadelphians' supporters were drawn from a wide range of religious and political backgrounds, appealing to radical Whigs like Boreman as well as political conservatives like Leade, Edward Hooker, and the nonjuror Francis Lee.¹¹ Hooker's collaboration with Boreman, both in co-publishing Pordage's writings and prosecuting a case of witchcraft at the Kent assizes in 1681, suggests that a shared commitment to the goal of religious peace and Christian reunification often trumped more conventional religious and political differences between individual members.¹² Boreman's obsession with hunting

¹⁰ Pordage possessed a Leiden MD (1639) and served as physician to Colonel Venn's regiment at Windsor Castle in the first civil war: R. W. Innes Smith, *English-Speaking Students of Medicine at the University of Leyden* (Edinburgh, 1932), 185; *CSPD*, 1655, 160 [TNA, SP 18/97/30 II]. He appeared frequently before the censors of the College of Physicians in London between 1637 and 1641: *RCPL*, *Annals*, iii, fos 170b, 188b, 189b, 209a, 209b, 209b–210a. For an overview of Pordage's life and career, see *ODNB*; A. Hessayon, 'Gold Tried in the Fire': *The Prophet Thearau John Tany and the English Revolution* (Aldershot, 2007), 194–200, 317–19. For his relationship with, and influence upon, Jane Leade, see J. Hirst, *Jane Leade: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic* (Aldershot, 2005), 23–40. Manfred Brod has likened Pordage's community at Bradfield in Berkshire, where visions of angels and demons were common, as a 'research institute for the supernatural' and a laboratory for psychic experiments: M. Brod, 'Dissent and Dissenters in Early Modern Berkshire', D. Phil. thesis (Oxford, 2002), 186.

¹¹ For the ecumenical aspirations of Leade and the Philadelphians, see Hirst, *Jane Leade*, 97–8. Hirst stresses that members typically rejected attempts to turn the world upside down, refused to condemn the beliefs and ritual practices of others, and sought links with like-minded individuals regardless of their confessional allegiances. Hooker captured perfectly the conservative social and political mindset of the early Philadelphians in the preface to the *Theologia Mystica*, where he argued that it was no business of God's children 'to change Kingdoms and Governments' and condemned the 'mobile . . . that monstrous Head, or mani headed Monster of Confusion . . . the multitude, the vulgar, the Populo . . . The common People': J. Pordage, *Theologia Mystica*, 45, 51, 87. For the Philadelphians' acceptance of the Church of England, the divine right of kings, and the nonjuring and Jacobite sympathies of some of its members, see especially B. J. Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought* (Cambridge, 1996), 5–10.

¹² Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, 261. Hooker, like Boreman, has hitherto escaped identification. He was in fact the same as the Edward Hooker who was educated at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, in the 1640s (in his fascinating will, made in 1704, he left a ring inscribed with 'my Mystic name' and

witches, alongside his devotion to the Philadelphian cause, also provides a further dissuasive to those tempted to link the struggle for religious toleration with an end to witch-hunting.

Boreman died in 1707.¹³ It is not known whether he continued in communion with Jane Leade and the Philadelphians after 1683, though it seems unlikely given his proneness to intemperate outbursts against the regime of Charles II that were in marked contrast to the political quietism preached by his colleague Edward Hooker. What is certain, however, is that the movement that he had helped to set up was soon to be decried and stigmatized by those in authority, smeared, according to one of its members, with 'the Imputation of Madness and Enthusiasm'.¹⁴ This, of course, was increasingly the fate of other sects and radical movements, such as the French Prophets, whose appearance in England in the first decade of the eighteenth century was accompanied by a salvo of 'official' rejoinders that typically imputed such diabolical 'enthusiasm' to a range of pathological complaints.¹⁵ Typical was the response of John Tutchin (d. 1707), editor of the Whig newspaper *The Observer*, who in 1707 called for the creation of a special Bedlam, where enthusiasts like the French Prophets might undergo a range of medical therapies rather than 'the Recipes prescribed by the Physicians of

C.C.C.C. 'to show the Colledge and University I was of'). During the 1650s, he would appear to have acted as a 'corrector of a press' (he later informed one Dr Littleton that he was approached in that capacity by one Edward Symons in relation to the printing of the *Eikon Basilike*) and later became a schoolmaster at Kingston-upon-Thames, where he married Anne Prest in 1661. He moved to the parish of St Stephen's, Coleman Street, in the city of London, around 1663. In that year, he described himself as 'doctor of phisick' and later claimed, in his will, to be a 'licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians of London' (for which no other evidence survives). At the time of his death, in 1707, Hooker was an inmate of Charterhouse Hospital in London. His will is a startling document, written in the language of a genuine mystic, in which he dispenses dozens of bequests, including mystical texts, to friends, colleagues, and officers of the Hospital. These included the works of Jacob Boehme, which clearly had pride of place in his collection. He also left a copy of 'my *Theologia Mystica*' to the Reader of the Chapel 'to be laid in the vestry by the Surplice'. Beneficiaries included Henry Soursby (d. 1711), the pastor of a seventh day Baptist congregation at Goodman's Fields, and the nonjuror and High Church Anglican Thomas Wagstaffe (1645–1712), whom he described as 'my venerable friend'; Venn, ii, 403; TNA, PROB 11/498, fos 218v–221r [12 June 1704; proved 6 December 1707]; J. Yonge, *Several Evidences Which Have Not Yet Appeared in the Controversie Concerning the Author of Eikon Basilike* (London, 1703), 19; Kingston Museum and Heritage Service, Kingston-upon-Thames, KB 21/2/1; LMA, DL/C/345, fo. 11v; F. Collins (ed.), *The Registers and Monumental Inscriptions of Charterhouse Chapel* (London, 1892), 54.

¹³ Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Rochester, P 397/1/1, sub burials, 28 December 1707. For Boreman's will, where he describes himself as a gentleman, see TNA, PROB 11/584, fos 173v–174r [5 April 1704; proved 19 April 1722]. Among those named as overseers were Thomas Skeggs of Chelsfield, Kent, whose wife was probably a patient of Boreman's, and Thomas Clayton of Bletchingly, Surrey, the brother of the leading Whig financier and exclusionist MP Sir Robert Clayton (1629–1707). In March 1687, one Thomas Looker of Chelsfield was indicted at the Kent assizes, accused of fraudulently taking money from Thomas Skeggs, gent, of the same place, in return for dispossessing his wife Margaret of an evil spirit: J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records: Kent Indictments Charles II 1676–1688* (London, 1997), 261, 270.

¹⁴ Cited in P. McDowell, 'Enlightenment Enthusiasms and the Spectacular Failure of the Philadelphian Society', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35 (2002), 516.

¹⁵ H. Schwartz, *The French Prophets: The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth-Century England* (Berkeley, CA, 1980); L. Laborie, 'The French Prophets: A Cultural History of Religious Enthusiasm in Post-Toleration England (1689–1730)', PhD thesis (Norwich, 2010), 237–76.

Doctors-Commons or the Crown Office'.¹⁶ The process whereby all forms of dissident religious and political behaviour, including that of many of the more moderate nonconformist groups, was construed as a form of somatic disorder was, as we have seen, replicated in the response to those who continued to argue for the reality of witchcraft and related preternatural phenomena. The end result was a process that witnessed the growing marginalization of religious dissenters and witchmongers, often one and the same, which was rooted in, and inextricably linked to, the politicization of all forms of social life in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

There were two major elements to this process that characterized the period from the Exclusion Crisis (1679–82) to the repeal of the witchcraft statute in 1736. In the first place, it seems indisputable that public support for witchcraft prosecutions primarily emanated from dissenting circles or other groups on the margins of English religious and political life. One of the last major defences of the reality of witchcraft in print was the product of one of the dominant figures of Restoration Dissent, Richard Baxter (1615–1691), whose *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits* (1691) drew heavily on corroboratory evidence that circulated widely in nonconformist circles. The work itself, the product of Baxter's lifelong interest in the subject, was published at a particularly sensitive moment for those like Baxter who laboured tirelessly for religious reunion and a national settlement of church divisions. In 1691, in the same year that he published on witchcraft, he once again reiterated the need for the creation of a broad-based state Church, which would not only bring about religious peace but would also empower the magistrate to initiate a countrywide programme of moral reform.¹⁷ Baxter was almost certainly encouraged to promote such a scheme as a result of similar developments within the dissenting movement which led to the 'Happy Union' effected by the Presbyterians and Independents in 1691. Baxter himself did not live to see the failure of the 'Union' which, predictably perhaps, took place against a backdrop of politically motivated charges of witchcraft aimed at the eccentric and unstable Congregational minister Richard Davis (1658–1714) of Rothwell in Northamptonshire. This affair, it should be stressed, was largely an internecine affair that split the dissenting community. The fits experienced by Davis' congregation were interpreted by some as genuine examples of diabolical possession. Others diagnosed fraud and delusion.

¹⁶ *Observer*, vol. 6, no. 42 [23–26 July 1707]; cf. the reaction of the Newtonian physician and governor of Bedlam Hospital, Nicholas Robinson (c.1697–1775), who argued that the French Prophets and other enthusiasts 'would have done much better under the Hand of the Physician, then the secular Arm': N. Robinson, *A New System of the Spleen, Vapours and Hypochondriack Melancholy* (London, 1729), 406–7. This work was dedicated to the eminent Whig physician Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753), who shared the author's approach to such matters. The latter was equally inclined to prescribe medical cures for those who claimed to see witches or suffer bewitchment.

¹⁷ W. M. Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium: Protestant Imperialism and the English Revolution* (London, 1979), 270–1. Lamont stresses Baxter's old-fashioned 'Toryism' and his support for the sacredness and inviolability of magistracy and monarchs—ideas which in earlier times fitted neatly with belief in witches and demons. As an adjunct, Baxter also continued to argue for the power of divinely ordained rulers to cure the king's evil: see R. Baxter, *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits* (London, 1691), 212–13. For cross-denominational support for Baxter's witchcraft enterprise, see above, Chapter 5.

The reaction of outsiders is not recorded, though it seems highly likely that episodes such as these were grist to the mill for those conformists who saw all Dissent as a type of pathological disorder.¹⁸ We do, however, have Baxter's response. He specifically mentioned the 'doleful' events at Rothwell in a concluding section of *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, which clearly left him nonplussed, and no wonder, for the failure of the 'Happy Union' was partly precipitated by 'the Madness, Blasphemies, Barkings and Bestiality' encouraged by the antinomian Davis.¹⁹

The influence of Baxter's work on discussions of witchcraft is difficult to gauge. There is little doubt, however, that in nonconformist circles he was pushing at an open door. Belief in an active Devil and diabolical witchcraft was axiomatic for most, as the events at Surey in Lancashire in the early 1690s suggest. While trials for witchcraft at the assizes virtually dried up after 1688, nonconformist ministers and laymen continued to feature prominently on those few occasions when accusations did proceed to trial. The last two trials for witchcraft to be heard on the home circuit—in 1698 and 1701—were significant in this respect, as both would appear to have been promoted by nonconformists. The trial of Mary Clarke of Ashford, Kent, in 1698, was the subject of a manuscript treatise written by the local Presbyterian Thomas James, which was clearly intended for publication. Three years later, Sarah Moredike was tried at the Surrey assizes for the bewitchment of Richard Hathaway after three magistrates, all of whom had strong connections to London Dissent, had examined the case and approved formal legal proceedings. The trial subsequently collapsed amid accusations that Hathaway had faked his bewitchment, the affair taking place against a backdrop of intense political and religious conflict in the capital.²⁰

The Hathaway case, however, is highly suggestive of a second critical current of thinking that informed so much discussion of witchcraft after 1688. It demonstrates neatly, alongside a host of other examples, the manner in which the idea of witchcraft had fallen prey to the demands of political debate in the age of the 'rage of party'. The political context informing the Hathaway case is complex and provides support for recent historical studies that have shown that the victory of the Whigs and the ideology of the Glorious Revolution (limited monarchy and religious toleration) was not as emphatic as traditional historiography would have us believe. Within a decade of William III's accession to the throne, support for the

¹⁸ For Davis, see the article by David Wykes in *ODNB*. For discussion in nonconformist circles of Davis' antics, see BL, Add. MS 4460, fo. 43r; *Cal. Rev.*, 332–3; P. Rehakosht, *A Plain and Just Account of a Most Horrid and Dismal Plague, Begun at Rowel, alias Rothwell, in Northampton-shire* (London, 1692), esp. 20–1.

¹⁹ Baxter, *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, 236–7. Here, and elsewhere, it should be stressed Baxter demonstrated a willingness to approve a range of explanations, including melancholy and madness, when faced with extraordinary symptoms and behaviour.

²⁰ For the trial at Ashford and James' pamphlet on the same, see above, 220 and n. Hathaway was subsequently tried as a cheat and impostor. For discussion of the various pamphlets engendered by the case, see P. Elmer (ed.), *English Witchcraft 1560–1736*, vol. 5: *The Later English Trial Pamphlets* (London, 2003), xi–xii, xix–xx, 65–96; L. Apps, 'Motive Hunting in the Case of Richard Hathaway', *Preternature*, 1 (2012), 72–99.

Tories was growing, both in national and local politics, and nowhere was this more apparent than in the city of London where, by the end of the century, the Whig majority in the corporation had been overturned by their Tory opponents. The turning point in the witchcraft case in which Richard Hathaway, an apprentice blacksmith, accused one Sarah Moredike of bewitching him, took place in the spring of 1701 when the accused fled her home in Southwark and sought refuge from her persecutors across the river in the city of London. Followed there by the mob, she was brought before two prominent aldermen, Sir Thomas Lane (d. 1709) and Sir Owen Buckingham (1674–1720), who, as magistrates, subjected her to various tests and bound her over to appear at the assizes. She was also subjected to a brief examination at the hands of a third magistrate, Dr David Hamilton (1663–1721), who happened to be Lane's son-in-law. All three were staunch Whigs and nonconformists, with impressive connections at court, in Parliament (Buckingham was an MP), and in the city of London.²¹ Crucially, however, they also represented a party whose fortunes had dipped alarmingly in the years immediately prior to the Hathaway affair. Having chosen to withdraw from engagement with popular politics in the 1690s, the London Whigs now found themselves a beleaguered minority in the government of the city. It was surely no coincidence that Lane, as JP,²² supported by Buckingham and Hamilton, now chose this moment in 1701 to re-engage with popular politics and to accede to the clamour of the mob in subjecting Sarah Moredike to trial by popular ordeal in the form of scratching.²³

In the interlude between Moredike's arrest and acquittal, and the trial of her main accuser, Richard Hathaway, two parliamentary elections were fought in which the Whigs reversed their electoral fortunes and once again emerged as the prime force in national politics. Lane and his dissenting allies, the chief beneficiaries of such developments, now engineered a dramatic *volte face*. At the subsequent trial of Hathaway for fraud, which took place just a couple of weeks after the death of William III, Lane, Buckingham, and Hamilton withdrew support for the accused,

²¹ For Lane, see A. B. Beavan (ed.), *The Aldermen of the City of London*, 2 vols (London, 1908–13), i, 86; ii, 194; O. Davies, 'Decriminalising the Witch: The Origin of and Response to the 1736 Witchcraft Act', in J. Newton and J. Bath (eds), *Witchcraft and the Act of 1604* (Leiden, 2008), 210–11. Lane was one of the two wealthy patrons of the dissenting minister Timothy Rogers, who published a book on melancholy in 1691: see above, 208. For Buckingham, see Beaven (ed.), *Aldermen of the City of London*, i, 42, 303, 304; ii, 119, 195; E. Cruickshanks, S. Handley, and D. Hayton (eds), *The Houses of Parliament. History of the Commons, 1690–1715*, 5 vols (Cambridge, 2002), iii, 389–91. For Dr Hamilton, who later served as physician and confidante to Queen Anne, see *ODNB*. He specialized in midwifery and gynaecological complaints, having written a doctoral thesis on hysteria (MD Rheims).

²² As a former lord mayor of London (in 1695), Lane possessed the right to serve as a JP for the borough of Southwark. Not surprisingly, this claim was often resented by fellow magistrates based in Surrey, who shared jurisdiction over this populous and often anarchic jurisdiction: see D. J. Johnson, *Southwark and the City* (London, 1969), 199, 222.

²³ For the convoluted nature of London politics in the period from 1689 to 1702, see especially G. S. De Krey, *A Fractured Society: The Politics of London in the First Age of Party, 1680–1715* (Oxford, 1985), 177–8, 183, 191, 198–9. In the period between 1694 and 1702, nine out of ten vacancies on the aldermanic bench were filled by Tory nominees. Only one Whig was chosen in this period—Sir Owen Buckingham.

who was tried before the presiding judge, loyal Whig, and arch-sceptic Sir John Holt. Hathaway, meanwhile, deserted by his former allies, was represented by a single brief, Sir Thomas Jenner (1638–1707), whose politics were firmly High Church and Tory.²⁴

The Hathaway case offers a salutary reminder of the way in which accusations about witchcraft, either formal or informal, were increasingly hijacked in this period by partisan elements within the body politic. The case of Jane Wenham (d. 1730), a Hertfordshire woman tried for witchcraft at Hertford in 1712, is well documented in this respect. On this occasion, the promoters of the trial emanated from the ranks of the county's Tory elite and their ministerial allies, who included Sir Henry Chauncy (1632–1719), the prosecuting justice, and Godfrey Gardiner (d. 1722), rector of Walkern, whose household constituted the focus of the suspected witch's *maleficium*.²⁵ Just how sincerely Tory grandees like Chauncy and his clerical associates adhered to belief in witchcraft is, however, open to question. It is possible that Tory magistrates and their High Church Anglican supporters, including some nonjurors, were attracted to witchcraft for much the same reason as that which appeared to prompt the Whig Sir Thomas Lane's initial interest in the Hathaway case. Politics in the first age of party was often a brutal, no-holds-barred affair in which zealots on both sides assiduously courted popular opinion. Witchcraft was particularly appealing in this respect as it facilitated engagement with, and manipulation of, crowds of men and women, many of whom genuinely feared the power of witches.

Two contemporary examples illustrate the point. In 1709, the Leicestershire parson and loyal Tory Humphrey Michel (d. 1722) took it upon himself to preside over a series of swimnings of suspected witches at Horninghold where he claimed hundreds, and in one case thousands, had turned out to witness the spectacle. Michel was clearly more than just an interested bystander. In addition to collecting money from parishioners in order to pay an innocent man to be swum (and so prove the validity of the test for suspected witches), he also preached on the dangers of witchcraft (one of the suspected witches walked out of church when he named his text, Deuteronomy 18:10–12).²⁶ In all probability Michel's faith in the reality

²⁴ Jenner was appointed recorder of London by Charles II in 1683 and was knighted in the same year. He was elected as MP for Rye in 1685 and created a Baron of the Exchequer in the following year. Attempting to flee with James II in 1688, he was captured and deprived of all his offices. Jenner was subsequently exempted from the Act of Indemnity of 1691 and expelled from the bench, but was allowed to resume his practice at the bar: *ODNB*, sub Jenner, Sir Thomas; B. Henning (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1660–1690*, 3 vols (London, 1983), ii, 646–7.

²⁵ For detailed analysis of the religious and political background which informed the trial of Jane Wenham, including discussion of the partisan motives of those who wrote pamphlets on the case, see P. J. Guskin, 'The Context of Witchcraft: The Case of Jane Wenham', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 15 (1981), 48–71; I. Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations, c.1650–c.1750* (Oxford, 1997), 132–6; M. Knights, *The Devil in Disguise: Deception, Delusion, and Fanaticism in the Early English Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2011), 193–240. For an annotated edition, with brief commentary, on the various publications spawned by the trial of Wenham, see Elmer (ed.), *English Witchcraft 1560–1736*, vol. 5, xii–xv, 99–360, 372–86.

²⁶ Rev. J. H. Hill, 'Diary of the Rev. Humphrey Michel: Rector of Blaston and Vicar of Horninghold, 1675–1722', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society*,

of witchcraft and the measures that he took to weed out witches from amongst his flock was genuine, as suggested by the fact that much of the surviving evidence for this case is to be found in the private recollections of his diary. Belief in witchcraft, which so rarely featured in the musings of High Church Anglicans and Tories before 1688, was not entirely extinct in the ranks of post-revolutionary loyalists. Witchcraft remained credible for many, especially where those engaged in diabolic mischief were also tainted with the badge of nonconformity. Local suspicions of witchcraft surrounding a Huntingdonshire couple, for example, as widely reported in clerical circles sometime around 1700, were confirmed for one of the ministers, Francis Say (c.1647–1705), when it was reported to him that the pair were ‘esteemed very evill people by their neighbours’ and ‘both great Dissenters but very lewd ones’.²⁷

It is notoriously difficult to determine with confidence the sincerity of such witnesses to witchcraft. There is little doubt that some at least who shared the religious and political convictions of loyal clergymen like Michel and Say harboured less scrupulous motives in their dealings with witches. This much is evident in the extraordinary case in September 1716 of the swimming of a suspected witch at a millpond near Fladbury in Worcestershire, where the principal instigator was a local Tory and JP named John Dineley alias Goodere (1680–1741). The lengthy depositions taken in this case leave little doubt that it was Dineley’s decision to swim the suspected witch, and that it was not promoted, on this occasion, by popular demand. Witnesses also did much to discredit Dineley’s judicial credentials and to question his moral probity. In addition to swimming naked in the millpond, Goodere was said to have subsequently asked some women onlookers ‘which of them would be kn . . . kt’, and on being asked why he had swum the woman, responded that it was ‘because the hair of her C..t was too long and reached under her feet’.²⁸ There is little doubt that the incident at Fladbury had been engineered in the first place by Goodere as an attempt to embarrass the local Whigs. Goodere was the son of Sir Edward (‘Ned’) Goodere (1657–1739), one of the principal supporters of the Tory interest in Worcestershire. As MP for the neighbouring

1 (1875), 377–8. For Michel’s strong Tory and High Church passions, reflected in a number of sermons preached in the aftermath of the succession of Queen Anne in 1702, see J. H. Pruett, ‘A Late Stuart Leicestershire Parson: the Reverend Humphrey Michel’, *Transactions of the Leicestershire Architectural and Historical Society*, 54 (1978–9), 26–38. Michel clearly cut an isolated figure within his locality, often lamenting the lack of justice available at the hands of partisan Whig judges and magistrates, and seeking to persuade dissenters to return to the Anglican fold. Shortly before the witchcraft episode, William Wake (1657–1737), bishop of Lincoln, recorded that Michel had been ‘accused to me for reading some odd verses of his own in the Church’—an indication, perhaps, of the strength of ill feeling towards him in the parish: Pruett, ‘A Late Stuart Leicestershire Parson’, 30–1; LPL, MS 1770, fo. 80.

²⁷ BL, Add. MS 22,910, fos 511r–v. Others named in Say’s account of events at Abbotsley, written to his friend the Cambridge academic and divine Dr John Covel (1638–1722), include Thomas Thory (d. 1709) and Edward Turner (c.1658–1714), as well as a local gentleman, Sir Robert Cotton (1644–1717), MP for Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, and elsewhere between 1679 and 1702, who served latterly as a ‘court Tory’: Venn, iv, 24, 237, 274; Henning (ed.), *House of Commons, 1660–1690*, iii, 744–8.

²⁸ HALS, Panshanger MS D/EP/F154 [deposition of Edward Comer or Corner, 5 October 1716].

borough of Evesham between 1708 and 1715 and agent to Sir John Pakington (1671–1727), the leader of the county's Tories, Ned Goodere frequently came into conflict with local Whigs and not surprisingly lost his seat in 1715.²⁹ The Whigs, of course, led by the bishop of Worcester William Lloyd (1627–1717), were now in the ascendant and Lloyd himself, who as a JP oversaw the depositions in the case against Goodere, lost little time in exploiting the change in political circumstances. Just two months before the swimming at Fladbury, Lloyd appointed his son, William, to the vacant living of the town, one of the wealthiest in the county.³⁰ John Goodere responded by seeking to taunt the Lloyds and to subvert their new-won authority. The choice of Cropthorne Mill, situated opposite Fladbury church and close to the Dineley's family home at Charlton, was both a deliberate provocation as well as an act of political desperation. The innocent victim in the case, the accused witch, was almost certainly a pawn in a much wider political game, one which the Gooderes were destined to lose in the long term along with their good name and reputation.³¹

In seeking to inflame local passions at Fladbury in 1716, Worcestershire's Tories, not for the first time, had succumbed to invoking witchcraft as a means to cast aspersions upon Bishop Lloyd and his supporters. A few years earlier—in 1703—one of his loyal canons, Dr John Jephcott (1640–1713), was the subject of a malicious complaint in the church courts, where he was accused of sleeping with a witch and a whore.³² The choice of witchcraft as a vehicle for criticism of the regime of Bishop Lloyd is particularly intriguing in the light of his own preoccupation with the preternatural—a common feature, as we have seen, of the latitudinarian and ecumenical spirit of churchmen like Lloyd. It is probably no coincidence, for example, that shortly after his elevation to the see of Worcester, Lloyd was taken to task about his new diocese by the Whig MP James Vernon (1646–1727), who claimed that it was 'infected with notions about witches'. In response to Vernon's demand for action (he was clearly a sceptic), Lloyd offered a tactful, if ambivalent, response in which he reserved a place for the Devil in the world of gentiles and pagans while hinting at the unlikelihood that men exposed to

²⁹ For Sir Edward Goodere's political career, see Cruickshanks, Handley, and Hayton (eds), *House of Commons, 1690–1715*, iv, 35–7. For his electioneering on behalf of Sir John Pakington in 1702, see W. A. Speck, *Tory and Whig: The Struggle in the Constituencies 1701–15* (London, 1970), 38.

³⁰ A. Tindall Hart, *William Lloyd 1627–1717: Bishop, Politician, Author and Prophet* (London, 1952), 211, 216.

³¹ In a deposition taken a few months after the swimming incident, Goodere was further accused of floating a barge on the Avon, opposite Fladbury church, on the sabbath, his appearance timed to coincide with the end of morning service. Various other misdemeanours committed by Goodere were collected by Lloyd in a dossier that was clearly intended to be used as a means of removing Goodere from the bench. Goodere inherited the name Dineley following the death of his mother, the daughter and sole heir of Sir Edward Dineley of Charlton, around 1708. He met his death at Bristol in 1741, strangled by his own brother.

³² Tindall Hart, *William Lloyd*, 197. It did not affect Jephcott's career. Three years later Lloyd supplied the archbishop of Canterbury with a testimonial on behalf of Jephcott, who was seeking further ecclesiastical benefices and preferment: Rev. D. Robertson (ed.), *Diary of Francis Evans, Secretary to Bishop Lloyd, 1699–1706* (Oxford, 1903), 132. For Jephcott's contribution to Richard Baxter's treatise on witchcraft, published in 1691, see above, 213.

the gospel, even though they 'may be so profligate' as to give themselves to the Devil, might contract with him to 'hurt any body else in a supernatural way'.³³ Lloyd's interest in the preternatural was long-standing. He was probably the Mr Lloyd who supplied Joseph Glanvill with stories of Welsh ghosts and apparitions included in the 1681 edition of the latter's work on witchcraft. Moreover, his interest in apocalyptic prophecy and astrology, as well as his open-minded approach to the possibility of miracles, suggests someone who was susceptible to mockery dressed up as witchcraft by his political enemies.³⁴ The use of witchcraft to discredit or embarrass political opponents was undoubtedly a consistent theme of political debate in this period. It allowed opponents to manipulate and shape popular opinion, particularly in periods of acute political division or crisis. Occasionally, the treatment of suspected witches mimicked that of candidates in general elections. In January 1700, the Tory newspaper, *The Post Boy*, reported how a woman suspected of witchcraft in St Albans in Hertfordshire was first scratched and then ducked, 'some of the more judicious Inhabitants' of the town concluding that she was a witch and thus 'scandalous to that Corporation'. Thereupon, the 'Mob', who 'always are bewitch'd and tumultuous', dragged the poor woman out of her bed, stuck her in a chair, 'hoist her upon their Shoulders, and carried her about the Town in Triumph, shouting and bauling out a Townsend, a Townsend'.³⁵ The 'mob' in this case was almost certainly acting under the influence of Whig elements in the town, where religious and political passions were rising at an alarming rate. In 1698, a new chapel for Protestant dissenters was established in the town, a development that undoubtedly exacerbated political divisions in the ranks of the town's governing body. These came to a head at the general election of January 1701 when the Whig candidate and 'profess'd Dissenter' Joshua Lomax (c.1652–1724), one of the co-founders of the new chapel, was elected as MP for the borough. His election, however, was subsequently declared void, while his Tory opponent John Gape Jnr (1652–1734) was elected in his stead amid accusations of

³³ J. Vernon, *Letters Illustrative of the Reign of William III, from 1696 to 1708, Addressed to the Duke of Shrewsbury*, ed. G. P. R. James, 3 vols (London, 1841), iii, 302–3 [8 June 1699]. Bostridge mistakenly suggests that the bishop of Worcester described in the letter was Edward Stillingfleet, who died a few months before the date of the letter: Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations*, 103n.

³⁴ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus: Or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions* (London, 1681), 278, 280; ODNB, sub Lloyd, William; W. Lloyd, *A Sermon Preached in White-Hall* [1 December 1667] (London, 1668), 11–12 and *passim*. Lloyd had served various Welsh cures and was bishop of St Asaph at the time of the publication of Glanvill's work on witchcraft. However, Henry More's description of him as 'Mr Lloyd' (he had been awarded his DD in 1667) in Glanvill's papers does cast some doubt on this ascription. Further evidence of Lloyd's interest in the preternatural is suggested by his letter to Archbishop Sancroft detailing the sufferings of the daughter of the lukewarm Whig and exclusionist MP Sir Peter Gleane (1619–1696) at the hands of a witch in August 1688: Bodl., Tanner MS 28, fos 162–3 [Lloyd to Sancroft, 17 August 1688]. Gleane was said to suffer from melancholy, a condition no doubt exacerbated by his financial and other problems following the Tory reaction in 1683: Henning (ed.), *House of Commons, 1660–1690*, ii, 397–8.

³⁵ *Post Boy*, no. 745 [16–18 January 1700]. The case is cited in J. Miller, *Cities Divided: Politics and Religion in English Provincial Towns 1660–1722* (Oxford, 2007), 49. The poor woman, Amy Townsend, was subsequently brought before a local JP, but died a few hours later in the town gaol. The reporter concluded that 'several are taken up to answer to it at the next Assizes for Hertfordshire, where no question but some of them will decently swing for it'.

electoral malfeasance and threats of mass social and political unrest among the town's inhabitants.³⁶

EXPLAINING DECLINE

As the foregoing examples suggest, accusations of witchcraft, formal or informal, continued to flourish in communities torn by religious and political conflict. The chronological pattern of such accusations would also seem to suggest that the activity of the Devil and witches was most to be expected at times of heightened political excitement. This reflects a pattern of behaviour and thought which, as we have seen, was firmly established in England before, during, and after the civil wars. It was particularly apparent in the bulge of trials and accusations in the period immediately following the Restoration, which coincided with the resurgence of religious persecution following the passage of the Second Conventicle Act (1670), during the agitation for Exclusion (1679–83), and in the revival of the 'rage of party' at the turn of the eighteenth century. Diabolical politics, however, also reflected local tensions and might rear its ugly head at otherwise unexpected times. During the mayoral election at plague-infested Southampton in 1665, for example, it was widely rumoured in dissenting circles that the Devil had made a personal appearance. Three years later at Rye in Sussex, one of the town's voters was said to have been murdered by witchcraft during the course of that borough's mayoral election.³⁷ A consistent theme throughout the period after 1660, moreover, was the recourse to demonological language by religious and political adversaries. In dissenting circles, for example, the Book of Common Prayer and other elements of the restored Anglican liturgy were frequently disparaged as forms of conjuration.³⁸ Turncoats were described as 'bewitched' or 'fascinated', while others

³⁶ For the political condition of St Albans at the end of the seventeenth century, see especially H. C. F. Lansberry, 'Politics and Government in St Albans, 1685–1835', PhD thesis (London, 1964), 207–8; Cruickshanks, Handley, and Hayton (eds), *House of Commons, 1690–1715*, ii, 293–8. For Gape and Lomax, see *ibid.*, iv, 2–4, 669–70.

³⁷ ESxRO, FRE 5490 [John Allin to Philip Frith, 20 December 1665]; RYE 8/32. Paul Monod has proposed that the sudden death of Henry Marten by witchcraft in the courthouse during the election of the mayor James Welsh may have been politically motivated. He suggests that the accusation was probably manufactured by the supporters of Welsh, a High Church Anglican, in order to embarrass the vociferous radical interest in the town. It is possible, however, to place a different spin on these events. The Marten family, as Monod points out, was supportive of the radical faction in the 1670s. They may have promoted the witchcraft accusation against Alice, the wife of the dead man, in order to infer divine displeasure at the election of a violent opponent of Dissent in the town. In the same year as the witchcraft accusation and disturbed mayoral election, the ejected minister and physician John Allin (the correspondent of Frith above) was acting on behalf of the Hurlestone family, one of whose members was responsible for promoting the witchcraft indictment against Alice Marten: P. K. Monod, *The Murder of Mr. Grebell: Madness and Civility in an English Town* (New Haven, CT and London, 2003), 89–90; ESxRO, FRE 5605 [John Allin to Philip Frith, 27 August 1668].

³⁸ J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records. Kent Indictments Charles II 1660–1675* (London, 1995), 174; CSPD, *Addenda*, 1660–1685, 7–8; C. Jackson (ed.), *The Diary of Abraham de la Pryme, the Yorkshire Antiquary* (Durham, Surtees Soc., 54, 1869), 293; [R. Wallis], *More News from Rome or Magna Charta Discoursed of Between a Poor Man & His Wife* (London, 1666), 12; cf. a Southampton

who propped up the restored regime were liable to be accused of dabbling in the dark arts. A labourer's wife at Great Yarmouth, for example, who gave vent to a range of anti-monarchical and pro-Dutch sentiments in 1668, was alleged to have predicted that once the King was overthrown, 'sorcerers' such as Sir Thomas Meadows, royalist JP for the town, 'should be cut off'.³⁹ The King and his family were not immune from such verbal abuse, which grew in ferocity with the revival of widespread fears of an impending civil war in the 1670s. In 1676, for example, rumours insinuating that the Stuarts were descended from witches began to circulate in opposition circles. Two years later, the plotter Colonel Scott was reported to have said that Charles II and his family 'came from nothing but Whoredome and Witchcraft'.⁴⁰ The source of such innuendo was of course the King's mother, Henrietta Maria, who had carried the stigma of witchcraft since the civil war.⁴¹ The wider context, however, which enabled such rumours to flourish and spread was undoubtedly provided by the genuine, if at times hysterical, fear of a resurgent Catholicism in the latter years of Charles II's reign.

The association of Roman Catholicism with witchcraft formed a consistent and dominant theme of English demonological thought from the Reformation to the end of the seventeenth century, and undoubtedly constituted an important element of Whig writing and propaganda from the late 1670s afterwards. It inspired works like Richard Bove's *Pandaemonium* (1684), drove radicals like William Boreman to despair and intemperate words, and created an atmosphere conducive to fear of demonic plots and witches. Scriptural archetypes such as the witch of Endor, recast in Catholic clothing, were to figure prominently in the pamphlet literature of the period as well as in plays and musical performances.⁴² The preoccupation with witchcraft in Whig and dissenting circles at this time was therefore hardly

woman, who believed that the Book of Common Prayer should be 'burnt to ashes' as it was only useful in curing 'Gall'd horses backs': Southampton City Archives, SC9/130/7.

³⁹ Anon., *Covenant-Renouncers, Desperate-Apostates, Opened in Two Letters, Written by a Christian Friend, to Mr William Gurnall of Lavenham in the County of Suffolk* (London?, 1665), 12, 24; NkRO, Y/S1/3, 213. Witchcraft may have been a topical subject in Yarmouth at this time. In the same year, 1668, Henry More was alerted to a case of witchcraft in the town: M. H. Nicolson (ed.), *Conway Letters. The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and Their Friends, 1642–1684* (New Haven, CT, 1930; revised ed. Oxford, 1992), 294. Two years later Margaret Ward of Yarmouth was prosecuted at the Norfolk assizes for witchcraft: TNA, ASSI 16/21/3.

⁴⁰ CSPD, 1660–1661, 352; CSPD, 1675–1676, 549–51, 553–4, 558–9; CSPD, 1676–1677, 6; Bodl., Rawlinson MS A 188, fo. 181.

⁴¹ See, for example, [E. Chamberlayne], *The Present Warre Paralell'd* (1647), 6.

⁴² See, for example, S. E. Plank, '“And Now About the Cauldron Sing”: Music and the Supernatural on the Restoration Stage', *Early Music*, 18 (1990), 392–407; A. E. Winkler, 'O Let Us Howle Some Heavy Note': *Music for Witches, the Melancholic, and the Mad on the Seventeenth-Century English Stage* (Bloomington, IN, 2006); A. E. Winkler, 'Enthusiasm and Its Discontents: Religion, Prophecy and Madness in the Music for *Sophonisba* and *The Island Princess*', *The Journal of Musicology*, 23 (2006), 307–30. The association of Roman Catholicism with belief in witchcraft formed a central theme of Thomas Shadwell's comedy *The Lancashire Witches, and Tegue O'Divelly the Irish Priest* (London, 1682). Shadwell (c.1640–1692), who associated with radical Whigs and wits at court, was clearly a witchcraft sceptic—a further reminder that attitudes to witchcraft never followed strict party lines. For Shadwell, see especially ODNB and J. B. Slagle, 'Thomas Shadwell's Censored Comedy *The Lancashire-Witches*: An Attack on Religious Ritual or Divine Right?', *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research*, 7 (1992), 54–63.

surprising and was fuelled, in the case of England, by recent events in Scotland and the suppression of the covenanting movement there. In 1678, for example, the rebel Presbyterian minister Matthew Mackaile (c.1612–1681) regaled his friend, Sir John Frederick (1601–1685), one of the leading figures in opposition circles in London, with the latest political news, which he interspersed with vivid descriptions of the examination and subsequent strangulation of suspected witches in Scotland.⁴³ In time, such rhetoric may even have encouraged some to actively pursue Roman Catholics as witches. In 1680, for example, a Derbyshire woman accused the royalist and Roman Catholic gentleman Sir Henry Hunloke (1645–1715), with others of his acquaintance, of using witchcraft to destroy her.⁴⁴

The period of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis witnessed, as we have seen, a last flourishing of trials, many of which would seem to have been generated by nonconformists or those sympathetic to their cause. Thereafter, witchcraft trials were rare events. Even these later trials, however, often took place against a backdrop of local religious conflict and political anxiety and were, with the notable exception of the Wenham case, largely initiated by the supporters of Dissent. On occasion, as in the Hathaway case, nonconformist magistrates played a decisive role in bringing such cases to court. Moreover, this may not have been an isolated instance. In 1686, Penzance in Cornwall was the site of a witchcraft trial that would appear to have been promoted by a pro-Dissent clique in the corporation.⁴⁵ Fourteen years later, Robert Burridge, nonconformist mayor of Lyme Regis in Dorset, a stronghold of dissent in the county, used his authority as a JP to promote the prosecution of two local women for witchcraft in the borough court.⁴⁶ In acting in this fashion, men like Burridge were no doubt assisted by ministers and physicians of the same faith who continued to provide theological and medical evidence to support the reality of witchcraft and special

⁴³ CSPD, 1678, 559. Mackaile's letters were being intercepted by the government at this time.

⁴⁴ Derbyshire Record Office, Q/SB/2/1214, 1215, 1390; reprinted in Rev. J. C. Cox (ed.), *Three Centuries of Derbyshire Annals, as Illustrated by the Records of the Quarter Sessions of the County of Derby, from Queen Elizabeth to Queen Victoria*, 2 vols (London, 1890), ii, 90. Hunloke lived at Wingerworth Hall, near Chesterfield, and sat as a JP under James II. He was struck off the commission in 1689, and was subsequently disarmed: *ibid.*, i, 307–9. Hunloke was presented as a papist and for absenting himself from divine worship by the constable of Wingerworth, 17 April 1683: Derbyshire Record Office, Q/SB/2/336.

⁴⁵ TNA, ASSI 23/3 [cited in Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 374, 444]; Anon., *A True Account of a Strange and Wonderful Relation of one John Tonken of Pensans in Cornwall* (London, 1686); C. Corey, 'Propaganda and Possession in Cornwall, 1642–1695', MA thesis (Exeter, 1998). The case was brought by Peter Jenken, the current mayor, and John Grosse, mayor in the previous year. Both men were prominent in the campaign to stave off Quo Warranto proceedings during the period of their mayoralties. Many years later, they were active on behalf of the 'usurper' mayor, John Carveth, and were accused of recruiting support from local Quakers to bolster Carveth's campaign: P. A. S. Pool, *The History of the Town and Borough of Penzance* (Penzance, 1974), 57–66, 280; P. Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic: Partisan Politics in England's Towns 1650–1730* (Cambridge, 1998), 314–15; Cornwall RO, P179/2/1/4–6, 10–11, 14–15, 27.

⁴⁶ DHC, D/LRM/T16 [3 June 1700]; TNA, ASSI 23/4, sub 2 August 1702 [sic]. Burridge's brother John (c.1651–1733) sat as the town's Whig MP from 1689 to 1695 and 1701 to 1710. He also served as mayor on three occasions, and supported James II's attempts to introduce toleration: Henning (ed.), *House of Commons, 1660–1690*, i, 752.

providences. Medical opinion on such issues was, as we have seen, of growing significance in adjudicating the merits of such claims. In High Anglican and Tory circles, it was most frequently invoked to undermine belief in witchcraft and spirits. Nonconformist physicians, on the other hand, took the opposite view, even when, as in the case of Richard Lower (1631–1691), the eminent physiologist and assistant of Thomas Willis, such men were engaged in cutting-edge research in the field of medicine.⁴⁷ Little would appear to have changed in this respect by the end of the century. Nonconformist physicians, for example, played a vital role in legitimating the claims of a series of miracle healers in the 1690s (above, pp. 203–4). Such concerns, moreover, continued to permeate the day-to-day practice of dissenting doctors well into the eighteenth century, as the casebooks of the eminent Essex physician and naturalist Benjamin Allen (1663–1738) testify.⁴⁸

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that by the end of the seventeenth century, a preoccupation with witchcraft was largely the preserve of those who inhabited the margins of English social and political life. In the vanguard of those determined to keep alive the idea of an active, providential deity opposed by an equally active Devil, assisted by witches, sorcerers, and others, were of course the dissenters, whose exclusion from the body politic was now enshrined in law. It should be noted, moreover, that one of the last full-blown attempts to reaffirm key elements of the belief in witchcraft and spirits was penned by a Roman Catholic, John Beaumont (c.1640–1731).⁴⁹ While Beaumont's work excited approbation among some Anglicans, most notably that indefatigable latitudinarian Edward Fowler and his friend Ralph Thoresby, the majority of Anglicans proved unresponsive to the

⁴⁷ The Oxford antiquary Anthony Wood recounts various occasions when Lower claimed to see ghosts and other preternatural phenomena: Rev. A. Clark (ed.), *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary, of Oxford, 1632–1695*, 5 vols (Oxford, Oxford Hist. Soc., 2, 1892), ii, 4, 10. Lower was the brother of the Quaker physician Thomas Lower (1633–1720). Richard's religious beliefs and Whig sympathies ultimately proved the undoing of his hugely successful medical practice in London and at court. Willis himself paid testament to Lower's contribution to his research on the brain in the preface to his *Cerebri Anatome* (1664), where he described him as an 'anatomist of supreme skill'. Lower later went on to pioneer methods of blood transfusion, as well as produce a major treatise on the cardiopulmonary system: *ODNB*, sub Lower, Richard.

⁴⁸ Ghosts, portents, and the Devil all figure prominently in Allen's casebooks, for which see Royal College of Surgeons' Library, London, MSS 0036 and 0037 ['Medical Observations Towards a Knowledge and Cure of Diseases'], 2 vols (c.1700–38). Henry French has suggested that these were originally intended for publication. A committed nonconformist and Whig, Allen dedicated his *Natural History of the Chalybeat* (London, 1699) to Charles Montagu, fourth earl of Manchester (d. 1722), who had fought alongside William III at the Battle of the Boyne. The work itself demonstrates Allen's familiarity with the most recent developments in natural philosophy and medicine, including the writings of Malpighi, Willis, and Boyle. He was also on friendly terms with fellow naturalists Martin Lister, Clopton Havers, Tancred Robinson (d. 1748), and John Ray (1627–1705): Venn, i, 16; C. Miller, 'Dr Benjamin Allen (1663–1738) of Braintree: A Forgotten Essex Naturalist', *Essex Naturalist*, 17 (1912), 145–75; C. Miller, 'More about Dr Benjamin Allen (1666–1738) of Braintree, Naturalist', *Essex Naturalist*, 17 (1912), 1–14; H. R. French, 'Social Perceptions and Self-Fashioning among Parish Elites in Essex, 1680–1740', *Social History*, 25 (2000), 50–5.

⁴⁹ J. Beaumont, *Historical, Physiological and Theological Treatise of Spirits, Apparitions, Witchcrafts and Other Magical Practices* (London, 1705). For Beaumont, see especially *ODNB* and J. Barry, *Witchcraft and Demonology in South-West England, 1640–1789* (Basingstoke, 2012), 124–64.

charms of yet more collections of witches and spirits.⁵⁰ In the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution, a new Whig establishment in Church and state had begun to take shape, one that was largely disinterested in, and dismissive of, the notion of special providences (not surprising, perhaps, given the way in which the Revolution of 1688 had been engineered) and the pursuit of witches. The lack of concern for the subject is perhaps most notable by its virtual absence from the deliberations of those moderate, eirenic Anglicans who sought to reform the morals of the nation in the 1690s through the establishment of bodies such as the societies for the reformation of manners and the SPCK.⁵¹ The fear of rampant atheism, of course, was a principal motivation for many Anglicans involved in such schemes, but few, if any, envisaged a war on diabolical witchcraft as part of that reform campaign.⁵² While there is evidence to suggest that some churchmen saw ecumenical potential in the spate of miracle narratives produced in the 1690s, the moment was short-lived. The appearance on the stage in the following decade of a new wave of ecstatic and inspired sectaries, the French Prophets, prompted many to question not just the authenticity of the Prophets' divine fits but also the validity of all spirit testimonies. Widely discredited as frauds, the Prophets and similar groups, as we have seen, were summarily dismissed as madmen and 'enthusiasts'.⁵³ The

⁵⁰ For Fowler's lifelong engagement with demonological beliefs, see above, 219–21. One of the few Anglican churchmen to support Fowler's stance on witchcraft was the old Calvinist conformist John Edwards (1637–1716), the son of the puritan heresy hunter Thomas Edwards (1599–1647). In 1695, Edwards took Hobbes, Webster, and the Dutch sceptic Balthasar Bekker (1634–1698) to task for their 'denial of Daemons and Witches', which he saw as tantamount to atheism: J. Edwards, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Several Causes and Occasions of Atheism, Especially in the Present Age* (London, 1695), 100–1. Edwards, like Fowler, was an isolated figure in Anglican circles. Ralph Thoresby, one of his few admirers, records visiting him in Cambridge in 1714, when he noted how he was 'much depreciated by some because of his moderation': J. Hunter (ed.), *The Diary of Ralph Thoresby, F. R. S.*, 2 vols (London, 1830), ii, 231–2.

⁵¹ For the background to these developments, see especially C. Rose, 'Providence, Protestant Union and Godly Reformation in the 1690s', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3 (1993), 151–69. My conclusions here must remain tentative in the absence of more firm evidence of Anglican attitudes to demonology at this time. I am indebted to my colleague Jonathan Barry for reminding me of the witchcraft concerns of the eirenic churchman Arthur Bedford (1668–1745), and for his suggestion that the threat of radical deism might reasonably be expected to have re-ignited support for belief in witchcraft, providence, and related concepts in eirenic Anglican circles. For Bedford, see J. Barry, 'Hell Upon Earth or the Language of the Playhouse', in S. Clark (ed.), *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke, 2001), 139–58.

⁵² One of the few examples that I have found is in the writings of the Anglican clergyman Edward Young (c.1642–1705). In 1695, Young, in an attempt to encourage the magistrate to take a more active role in promoting a reformation of manners in England, made a plea for a more severe prosecution of various crimes, including 'Wizardism', sorcery, and fortune-telling. Many years earlier, Young had claimed that among the numerous tenets held by the modern atheist was 'to cry down as absurd the doctrine of spirits and all matters of fact that tend to assert their being', they obtaining no more credit 'then Lucien's raillery upon the enchanted Broomstaff': E. Young, *Piety's Address to the Magistrate* (London, 1695), 18–19; E. Young, *A Sermon Preached Before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London* [17 February 1677/8] (London, 1678), 30. For a brief overview of Young's career, see *ODNB*.

⁵³ We should not be surprised to learn, perhaps, that one of the few Anglican voices to insist upon the demonic origin of the outrageous behaviour and strange fits of the French Prophets was that of Edward Fowler, who saw 'more of Possession than intended Imposture or delusion, in them': E. Fowler, *Reflections Upon a Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* (London, 1709), 56.

'disenchantment' of the body politic around 1700 now took on many forms. Its impact is neatly captured in the words of the Low Church Whig Benjamin Hoadly (1676–1761) in 1705 who, preaching before the mayoral election in London, reminded his audience that 'Magistracy is not a Matter of Pomp and Retinue, to attract the Eyes, and raise the Wonder of the Multitude, but a Business of labour and difficulty'.⁵⁴ The decline of charismatic magistracy was in turn reflected in the elevation of matter-of-fact judges to the bench, such as the staunch Whig Sir John Holt (1642–1710), who was notoriously disinclined to give credence to any who promoted cases of witchcraft in his courts. It was also, of course, an Anglican bishop, Francis Hutchinson (1660–1739), who published the last major work attacking belief in the reality of witchcraft in 1718.⁵⁵

A further factor in the decline of interest in witchcraft in Whig circles in this period, particularly among the elite leadership of the 'party', was undoubtedly the growing influence of radical deism. The expiry of the Licensing Act in 1694 and the emergence of an unregulated press created an atmosphere conducive to intellectual and philosophical speculation. The resulting flood of publications included many which cast doubt upon traditional demonological accounts of witchcraft. Such works formed part of what many contemporaries saw as a wider assault upon all aspects of orthodox Christianity, including a rejection of the special role of spirit in man and nature. Typical was the work of the physician William Coward (d. 1724), who in 1702 caused uproar, even in some radical circles, when he published a full-blown assault on the notion of the immortality of the soul. Coward, citing the work of fellow physician Francis Glisson alongside Hobbes and Locke, derided orthodox notions of the human soul as a 'heathenish invention'.⁵⁶ Even innocuous-looking publications sometimes proved useful vehicles for promoting scepticism. In 1703, at the height of the controversy sparked by Coward, an English translation of Aesop's *Fables*, written by the radical Dutch political theorist Pieter de la Court

⁵⁴ B. Hoadly, *A Sermon Preach'd Before the Right Honourable, the Lord-Mayor, Aldermen, and Livery-Men of the Several Companies of London . . . Before the Election of the Lord-Mayor* [St Lawrence Jewry, London, 29 September 1705] (London, 1705), 22. For Hoadly, see *ODNB*. Ian Bostridge has argued that his deistic freethinking, evident in a discourse on the Lord's Supper published in 1735, served as 'the starting-point for the only extant pamphlet straightforwardly opposing the repeal of the Witchcraft Act' in 1736: Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations*, 191–2.

⁵⁵ F. Hutchinson, *An Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft* (London, 1718). For the political roots of Hutchinson's work, see especially Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations*, 145–54 and A. Sneddon, *Witchcraft and Whigs: The Life of Bishop Francis Hutchinson (1660–1739)* (Manchester, 2008), esp. ch. 5. In what Bostridge claimed was 'a trial run for his book about witchcraft', Hutchinson published a damning critique of the French Prophets whose mental faculties, he argued, were 'as plain a touch of Madness as any of the Follies of Bedlam': Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations*, 147, 148; F. Hutchinson, *A Short View of the Pretended Spirit of Prophecy* (London, 1708).

⁵⁶ Estibus Psychalethes [i.e. William Coward], *Second Thoughts Concerning Human Soul* (London, 1702). Coward's work spawned various replies and a rejoinder. In 1704 he was called to the bar of the House of Commons and forced to apologize for his offence. In the meantime, his books were ordered to be burnt by the common hangman. For a recent reappraisal of Coward, which depicts him in many ways as a loyal Anglican, opposed to sectarian 'enthusiasm', but with Socinian leanings, see A. Thomson, *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion, and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2008), 104–17.

(1618–1685), appeared in print containing a large section ridiculing the reality of witchcraft.⁵⁷

Deism first emerged as a fringe belief among radical Whigs in the late 1670s, spearheaded by freethinkers like Charles Blount (1654–1693) who sought to undermine the notion of an immortal soul. In *Anima Mundi* (1679), he dismissed belief in witches as a product of human folly, citing Montaigne to that effect, and in later publications incorporated the work of Hobbes and Spinoza in order to further undermine a range of traditional Christian beliefs. During the course of the 1690s, such thinking began to spread in deistic circles, promoted by outspoken critics of ‘priestcraft’ such as John Toland (1670–1722), who employed intellectual rigour and ridicule in equal measure in an attempt to expose the inanities of his age.⁵⁸ Not surprisingly, he paid the price and in time-honoured fashion was stigmatized by his opponents as ‘an accomplish’d Conjurer for ridiculing Necromancy, and the Second Sight’.⁵⁹ The influence of radicals like Toland, and the extent of the networks of like-minded thinkers, remains a matter of conjecture. Often the evidence is fragmentary and ambiguous, but fascinating nonetheless. The case of the physician Richard Blackburne (c.1651–1716) provides a case in point. As a young man, Blackburne was employed by John Aubrey to write the first biography of Thomas Hobbes. Aubrey praised Blackburne as a ‘philo Hobbist’ who had ‘harried’ all of Hobbes’ adversaries, but also described him as a great admirer of John Locke. While little else is known about his subsequent contribution to the early Enlightenment in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century England, we do have a tantalizing glimpse of the circles in which he was moving by the time of his retirement from London practice in about 1700. Blackburne was living in Sutton in Surrey at the time of his death, where he was clearly part of a wide network of freethinking friends and acquaintances that included Isaac Littlebury (c.1657–1710), William Stephens (c.1649–1718), and Anthony Collins (1676–1729).⁶⁰ All three men were prominent figures in radical Whig and republican circles. Littlebury, for example, has been suggested as the editor and reviser of Edmund Ludlow’s *Memoirs* who was responsible for rewriting the same to read

⁵⁷ P. de la Court, *Fables Moral and Political*, 2 vols (London, 1703), ii, 342–55. For de la Court’s role, alongside his brother Johann (1622–1660), in the Dutch republic of letters, see J. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001), 22 and *passim*.

⁵⁸ C. Blount, *Anima Mundi* (Amsterdam, 00000, i.e. London, 1679), esp. 35–40. For Blount, a member of the Green Ribbon Club and propagandist for the Whig cause, see *ODNB*. For Toland and the assault on priestcraft, see esp. J. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and Its Enemies, 1660–1730* (Cambridge, 1992); J. Champion, *Republican Learning: John Toland and the Crisis of Christian Culture, 1696–1722* (Manchester, 2003).

⁵⁹ J. Toland, *A Collection of Several Pieces of Mr John Toland*, 2 vols (London, 1726), ii, 307.

⁶⁰ M. Hunter, *John Aubrey and the Realm of Learning* (New York, 1975), 78–9; *ODNB*, sub Blackburne, Richard [which fails to note the significance of Blackburne’s radical connections as manifest in his will]; W. B. Bannerman (ed.), *The Parish Registers of Sutton, Co. Surrey* (London, 1915), 35; TNA, PROB 11/552, fos 206r–207r [11 June 1713; proved 1 June 1716]. Blackburne was the brother of the Whig clergyman Lancelot Blackburne (1658–1743), who, as sub-dean of Exeter, witnessed a witchcraft trial in that city in 1696. His views of the proceedings, however, are somewhat opaque: *Notes and Queries*, 11 (1855), 498–9 [Blackburne to Bishop Jonathan Trelawny, September 1696].

as a manifesto for late seventeenth-century radical Whiggism. More recently, John Toland has been proposed as the more likely candidate.⁶¹ However, the presence at Sutton of two other known collaborators with Toland—Stephens and Collins—suggests that the editorship of Ludlow may have been a collaborative project. William Stephens, the radical minister of Sutton, was a prolific author of controversial religious and political works, who worked with Toland in 1699 and dedicated a work to him critical of the duke of Marlborough in 1705.⁶² Collins, perhaps the most prominent figure in this group, was a close friend and supporter of Toland, the two men exchanging books, including the third volume of Ludlow's *Memoirs*.⁶³

What is perhaps most intriguing about this digression on the hitherto unregarded career of Richard Blackburne is the extent to which heterodox ideas (deism, Hobbism, and so on) that were marginal philosophical pursuits in the 1670s and 1680s were beginning to enter mainstream Whig thinking by the early decades of the eighteenth century. At the same time, elements of the new heterodoxy also appealed to a broad cross-section of Tory opinion, cross-party allegiance often secured through a shared interest in the pursuit of new ideas about man and the natural world. A case in point is suggested by the role played by the Tory physician and virtuoso Sir Tancred Robinson (c.1657–1748) in defending the work of one L. P., in which a whole range of traditional Christian tenets were rejected, including belief in witchcraft and spirits, by recourse to the arguments of Hobbes and the Dutch sceptics Anthony van Dale (1638–1708) and Baltashar Bekker (1634–1698).⁶⁴ After 1715, such developments continued apace, with influential figures on both sides of the political divide increasingly arguing for a new middle ground in which belief in witchcraft was depicted as a superstitious aberration, the

⁶¹ Blackburne asked to be buried as near as possible to the grave of Littlebury, whose monument at Sutton described him as 'a lover of public liberty and good order': TNA, PROB 11/552, fo. 206r. For the debate surrounding the editorship of Ludlow's *Memoirs*, see B. Worden, 'Whig History and Puritan Politics: The *Memoirs* of Edmund Ludlow Revisited', *Historical Research*, 75 (2002), 209–37, esp. 213–15.

⁶² Blackburne left small bequests to Stephens and Collins ('in token of my respects to him') in his will: TNA, PROB 11/552, fo. 206v. For Stephens, who also got into trouble for making derogatory remarks about monarchy in a 30 January sermon commemorating the regicide, see Worden, 'Whig History', 228; ODNB, sub Stephens, William.

⁶³ For Collins, see Worden, 'Whig History', 236 and n; ODNB, sub Collins, Anthony.

⁶⁴ L. P., *Two Essays Sent in a Letter from Oxford to a Nobleman in London. The First Concerning Some Errors about the Creation... The Second Concerning the Rise, Progress and Destruction of Fables and Romances* (London, 1695), ii, 35–6; T. Robinson, *A Letter Sent to Mr William Wotton* (London, 1697). The identity of L. P. has eluded historians. I would tentatively suggest that the best candidate was Robinson's old friend, Luke Plukenet (1642–1706), an eminent botanist and physician. In discussing John Toland's claim to authorship, Rhoda Rappaport did note that Plukenet was one of the few candidates with these initials publishing at this time, though she seems to have been unaware of his close acquaintance with Robinson: R. Rappaport, 'Questions of Evidence: An Anonymous Tract Attributed to John Toland', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 58 (1997), 347, n. 27. Robinson's political allegiances are evident in his reporting of 'whiggish conspiracies' to the Tory physician Martin Lister at the height of the government reaction to Exclusion: Bodl., Lister MS 3 [Robinson to Lister, 12 April 1683]. The works of the sceptic van Dale, cited by L. P., were first translated into English by the Tory agent and spy Aphra Benn: A. van Dale, *The History of Oracles* (London, 1688).

product of mental disorder, and as such on a par with the ranting and ravings of religious enthusiasts.

Four years after Francis Hutchinson published his treatise on witchcraft, the Jacobite nonjuror and antiquarian bibliophile Thomas Rawlinson (1681–1725) approached his old college friend Samuel Weller (1684–1753), now vicar of Maidstone in Kent, in the hope that he might be able to use his local contacts to provide further details of the series of witchcraft trials held there in 1652. These were to form part of a book on the subject, the subtext of which was clear, namely that witchcraft was a throwback to an earlier era and more specifically that it was a product of puritan fanaticism. The linkage between witchcraft and enthusiasm could not have been made any more explicit for, Rawlinson claimed:

It is notoriously evident that in the last miserable times of *Rebellion & Usurpation*, the unhappy notions of the absurd Power of Witches to hurt both Man and Beast had taken so great a Possession of the Minds of the credulous & weak Teachers of those Times, that it was thought no less than doing *God Service* to promote the Prosecution & Execution of silly ignorant Old Women under the Name of Witches.⁶⁵

Quite why Rawlinson thought that another book on witchcraft was required at this time is a matter for conjecture. It is clear from the brief notes which survive, however, that it would have shared many of the underlying assumptions of Hutchinson's work in which the 'historical' nature of witchcraft and its links to 'enthusiasm' and religious fanaticism were a constant theme. Both men were also able to draw on a growing body of medical evidence to support the idea that those who claimed to be afflicted by witchcraft or possession were in fact suffering from a form of mental illness comparable to the fits and seizures of religious enthusiasts. In the period immediately preceding the repeal of the Witchcraft Act in 1736, such thinking was becoming commonplace in both Whig and Tory circles and formed the basis of a new consensus on the subject that was increasingly non-partisan in character. Typical, perhaps, in this respect was the figure of Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753), a pillar of the Whig establishment whose self-appointed role as *the* agent of intellectual communication in early eighteenth-century England encouraged cross-party cooperation in the search for scientific truth. At various points in his long career Sloane had dabbled with radical scepticism. In 1706, for example, he was acting as confidante and adviser to his friend and fellow physician William Coward (for whom, see above, p. 287) with regard to the

⁶⁵ Morrab Library, Penzance, MOR/MAN/54/3 [notes by Rawlinson? on witchcraft, including letters from 'my old Acquaintance and Chamber Fellow at Oxford' Samuel Weller to Rawlinson?, 17 September and 10 October 1722]. On the basis of internal evidence, the identification of the author of the letters as Thomas Rawlinson is convincingly made in J. Dearlove, 'The Pretended Crime of Witchcraft', in J. Palmer (ed.), *Treasures of the Morrab: A Penzance Library That Has More Than Books* (Penzance, 2005), 21–30. Rawlinson's close friend and fellow antiquarian Thomas Hearne (1678–1735) described him as 'contra fanaticorum rabiem'. Weller would appear to have shared Rawlinson's scepticism, commenting favourably on Hutchinson's recent book on the subject. He was not able, however, to shed any further light on the trials held at Maidstone in 1652 (for which see above, 144 and 161–3).

publication of the latter's *Ophthalmiatria* in which Coward ridiculed the Cartesian notion of a separate immaterial soul located in the pineal gland.⁶⁶ In the same year, Sloane would appear to have played a startlingly similar role, acting as adviser to Francis Hutchinson in his first, abortive attempt to publish on the subject of witchcraft. Six years later, Hutchinson revised plans to publish his *magnum opus*, hoping once again to receive the imprimatur of Sloane, and to 'submit all to your prudence & judgment'. Ever the 'moderate', Sloane once again advised caution, the work finally appearing in 1718 when the political circumstances were far more propitious.⁶⁷ Sloane's sceptical attitude to witchcraft would appear to have been a lifelong preoccupation, albeit one that has until recently escaped the notice of historians. New light on Sloane's attitude to witchcraft, magic, and the occult, however, neatly demonstrates how Sloane's religious and medical mindset—in common with many of his contemporaries—discouraged the idea of the presence of demons and witches in the natural world. In 1740, Sloane was the author of a brief memoir on the life of the Somerset naturalist and demonologist John Beaumont (for whom, see above, p. 285), in which he adopted, in the words of Michael Hunter, a 'brutally reductionist explanation' for Beaumont's supposed encounters with spirits, envisaging them as a 'type of mental disorder which was susceptible to therapeutic treatments which he and other doctors had tested'. Sloane, as Hunter makes clear, was working within a tradition established by Willis after the Restoration, in which all abnormalities of mind were construed as a form of physiological dysfunction and thus amenable to cure. He even refers at one point in the 'Memoir' to consulting 'experts' such as Edward Tyson (for whom, see p. 262).⁶⁸ Hunter, moreover, is surely correct in placing Sloane's thoughts on witchcraft and madness within the context of the contemporary debate over religious enthusiasm. By intimating, like Rawlinson, that belief in witchcraft was the preserve of deranged, religious fanatics, Sloane thus helped to create the basis for an expanding cross-party and consensual middle ground on the subject of witchcraft, where support for the latter was increasingly dismissed as the preserve of fringe groups who found themselves excluded from the Hanoverian body politic.

⁶⁶ W. Coward, *Ophthalmiatria, qui Accurata et Integra Oculorum Male Affectorum Institutitur Medela* (London, 1706); BL, Sloane MS 4040, fo. 171 [Coward to Sloane, 28 May 1706]. Ever the 'moderate', Sloane tried to encourage the intemperate Coward to tone down the expression of views that were bound to cause yet further controversy. Thomson has convincingly argued that it was Coward's deep-seated hostility to sectarian enthusiasm or religious fanaticism that lay at the root of his opposition to the doctrine of an immaterial soul 'which he saw as reinforcing obscurantism and a remnant of papist ideas that must be removed': Thomson, *Bodies of Thought*, 104; cf. Mark Goldie, who, as Thomson points out, has seen this position as essentially Whig in kind: M. Goldie, 'Priestcraft and the Birth of Whiggism', in N. Phillipson and Q. Skinner (eds), *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1993), 209–31.

⁶⁷ BL, Sloane MSS 4040, fo. 302 [Hutchinson to Sloane, 4 February 1705/6]; 4043, fo. 38 [same to same, 3 April 1712]; Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations*, 34–5, 143–4.

⁶⁸ M. Hunter (ed.), *Magic and Mental Disorder: Sir Hans Sloane's Memoir of John Beaumont* (London, 2011), xiv, xv, 14, 15.

END NOTES: WITCHCRAFT ON THE MARGINS

Witchcraft as a historical phenomenon, both as a concept and a crime, was intrinsically indebted to, and shaped by, the wider political framework of early modern England. As a set of beliefs, demonology, seen through the lens of inversion, offered commentators an opportunity to explore the nature of true government in a godly society. And as a stimulus to action, it provided an intellectual rationale for the hunting of witches, which in turn acted as a barometer of political tensions in the body politic. It was never, however, a simple accessory to state-building. In political terms, witch-hunting was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the idea of witchcraft and the pursuit of witches constituted, in the words of Stuart Clark, 'a critical test of political legitimacy'.⁶⁹ This was manifest in the early years of the Elizabethan settlement, and at the outset of the civil war, when new and vulnerable regimes, eager to impose a new godly order on the state *ab initio*, were able to demonstrate divine approbation for their new-won authority through the discovery and eradication of various enemies of the state, including the witch. At other times, however, witchcraft beliefs seem more commonly to have acted as a vehicle for the expression of opposition to those who held the reins of power, in which the presence of witches in the body politic insinuated political failure and weakness. The dilemma for contemporaries was neatly captured by the preacher Henry Carpenter (d. 1662) in the summer of 1653, when, preaching before the assize judges in Salisbury just a few months after the execution in the city of the witch Anne Bodenham, he posed the question: 'Why the Devil seems more familiar with Men in our Time, then in former Days? Why Witchcraft so much abounds?' Carpenter was only too aware that for some, especially those political enemies of the Cromwellian state, the prevalence of witchcraft might be construed as a damning indictment of the new regime. He thus went to great pains to explain that the Devil and witches were now more active, not 'because of Reformation' but rather because of the absence of true godliness, which he then used as a launch pad for a moral crusade against sinfulness in all its forms.⁷⁰ Witchcraft, in other words, was inherently Janus-faced and had been so ever since the passage of the first witchcraft statutes in the sixteenth century.

If witchcraft, as an ideological construct, was inherently contradictory, it was also inherently unstable and open to question. Demonologists themselves often admitted as much in seeking to account for a range of phenomena that might or might

⁶⁹ S. Clark, *Thinking With Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), 552.

⁷⁰ H. Carpenter, *A Sermon Preached at the Assizes in Salisbury* [23 July 1653] (London, 1653), 32–3. Carpenter chose as his text Mark 9:29 ['This kind can come forth by nothing, but by Prayer and Fasting'], commenting how in such 'distempered times of violent and various Occurrences, 'tis hard to speak pertinently to any Text, and acceptably to all Hearers, especially when there are so many Counter-parties, tuning their ears to the key of their own interests and fancies': *ibid.*, unpaginated 'epistle to the reader'. In line with other 'moderates', he clearly envisaged witchcraft as affording a space for men of differing religious opinions to find some common ground. For Carpenter, who retained his living as vicar of Steeple Ashton in Wiltshire throughout the interregnum, but was rapidly promoted in the restored Church, see Venn, i, 239.

not be ascribed to the actions of witches under diabolical supervision. Doubt or uncertainty was virtually built into the system. The Devil, as a super-intelligent spirit, was capable of all manner of deceit. Acts perpetrated by witches might as easily be ascribed to Satan, or natural causes, which strictly speaking were one and the same in conventional demonological thinking. It is hardly surprising then that in practice, those faced with adjudicating accusations against witches, including clergymen, jurists, and physicians, considered a range of options before proceeding to judgement. Theology, jurisprudence, and medicine were clearly important in the deliberations of those involved in such trials. However, they seldom, if ever, provided a sure and consistent guide to guilt. As bodies of ideas, they were all capable of providing good reasons as to why, in any given incidence of suspected witchcraft or sorcery, the suspected party might be either innocent or guilty. The deciding factor in so many trials was not the trustworthiness of witnesses or the convincing nature of the evidence, but rather the political context, both local and national, in which such trials took place. This alone, I believe, explains the peculiar chronological and geographical pattern of witch trials in England over almost two centuries, as well as the outcome of numerous individual trials where the surviving evidence allows for such a judgement to be made.

In 1997, Ian Bostridge brilliantly demonstrated how the ultimate fate of witchcraft was decided not through argument and reason, but rather by the dictates of politics and the emergence of a religiously and politically plural state in the wake of the Glorious Revolution. Here, I have tried to build on those foundations, and to demonstrate through a mass of case studies and a range of evidence the extent to which political imperatives permeated discussion of witchcraft and witch trials from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. The decline of witch beliefs and witch trials, in this reading, was implicit from the outset, as with each political crisis and round of witch-hunting the seeds of doubt, feeding off the inherent inconsistencies latent in demonological thinking, were sown among the nation's elite. Moreover, instead of following a steady downward linear trajectory, it might be more accurate to describe the process of decline as cyclical, an approach that Alex Walsham has recommended in reference to the related issue of the process of 'desacralization' in early modern Europe.⁷¹

In each episode or cycle of debate and growing doubt, more often than not orchestrated by the powers that be, the pool of support for witchcraft shrank and, in the process, became increasingly associated with excluded groups on the margins of the body politic, who, like the Restoration dissenters, agitated for re-admission to the hallowed portals of power and influence. The marginalization of witchcraft in English society, however, took many forms. One of the more intriguing aspects of the later period, when witchcraft was becoming increasingly tainted by its association with religious 'enthusiasm' and Dissent, is the extent to which those who wished to preserve belief in the reality of witchcraft did so by citing instances drawn

⁷¹ A. Walsham, 'The Reformation and the Disenchantment of the World Reassessed', *Historical Journal*, 51 (2008), 497. The cyclical nature of interest in witchcraft was first suggested to me by Jonathan Barry.

from regions and countries geographically remote from, and peripheral to, England. As witch trials dwindled in England, examples from Ireland, Scotland, and New England continued to proliferate and were eagerly collected and discussed among the 'anti-Sadducees' who concentrated in dissenting circles after 1688. Richard Baxter, one of the most respected and influential figures in late seventeenth-century nonconformity, set the tone, utilizing his diverse range of contacts and networks in order to provide concrete examples of the existence of spirits and witches. In doing so, it is noteworthy how dependent he was on cases that originated outside England in other parts of the British Isles.⁷² Baxter's book, in turn, as Brian Levack has recently suggested, provided a body of evidence for his non-English admirers to draw upon while investigating new claims of demonic possession and witchcraft.⁷³ Some of these later cases, moreover, such as the trial of the witches of Islandmagee in Ulster in 1711, were enmeshed in local politics—in this case the 'scepticism' of the Anglican and Tory magistrate standing in stark contrast to the 'credulity' of the Presbyterian clergy who were promoting the trial.⁷⁴

It is tempting to speculate that this tendency to look elsewhere for solid evidence of diabolism and witchcraft reflected the politically sensitive and contested nature of homegrown examples of witchcraft, and a desire on the part of those who continued to defend belief in witchcraft and related phenomena to sidestep partisan politics. Such an approach may well have informed the thinking of one of England's foremost natural philosophers of the late seventeenth century, Robert Boyle (1627–1691). Boyle, whose lifelong interest in the subject is well known, was also profoundly cautious and circumspect by nature, rarely betraying his innermost thoughts on the religious and political debates of his era. It is probably no coincidence then that in amassing evidence of the reality of spirits, demons, and witches, particularly towards the end of his life, he was consistently drawn to examples and instances obtained from travellers to far off lands, including Russia, the West Indies, and Asia.⁷⁵ Boyle was clearly not alone in this respect. Henry

⁷² Baxter, *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, 20–36, 38–40, 52, 107, 128–46, 214–17, 218–20. For Baxter's contacts with New England, and his interest in and contribution to the work of the Mathers in publishing evidence of providences and witchcraft, see Keeble and Nuttall (eds), *Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, ii, 307–9 and above, 188.

⁷³ B. P. Levack, 'Demonic Possession in Early Modern Scotland', in J. Goodare, L. Martin, and J. Miller (eds), *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland* (Basingstoke, 2008), 175. Note especially Levack's comment that 'during the 1690s, as the controversy over spirits intensified, the anti-sadducees... tended increasingly to be English dissenters, New England puritans and Scottish Presbyterians': *ibid.*, 176.

⁷⁴ A. Sneddon, *Possessed by the Devil: The Real History of the Islandmagee Witches and Ireland's Only Mass Witchcraft Trial* (Dublin, 2013), esp. 153–60. Patrick Adair (d. 1717), one of the Presbyterian clergymen who gave evidence against the accused witches in 1711, was the son of the minister Patrick Adair (d. 1694), who supplied Robert Boyle with instances of preternatural phenomena in 1687–8: Boyle, *Correspondence*, vi, 207–9, 276–8.

⁷⁵ For Boyle's collection of materials on witches and sorcerers gathered from foreign travellers between 1684 and 1691, see Royal Society Library, RB/1/21, 273, 276, 287–8, 301, 303, 306, 311–12. For his earlier receipt of letters on Russian witchcraft from Samuel Collins, physician to the Tsar, see above, 204–5. It is possible that Boyle intended to publish these testimonials as a sequel to his collection of 'Strange Reports', appended to his *Experimentae et Observationes Physicae* (1691); M. Hunter, 'Alchemy, Magic and Moralism in the Thought of Robert Boyle', *British Journal for the*

More claimed in 1670 to be in touch with an 'intelligencer' based in India, who assured him that the 'Brahmins' and others of those parts engaged in conference with the Devil. He suggested that 'our witts' at home should make the same journey, 'that being assured there are devils in India, they may come home with a belief there is a God in England, or rather every where'. Others, such as the New England traveller John Josselyn, published accounts of the marvels they encountered, and thus helped stimulate further discussion of such matters at home.⁷⁶

In most cases, the recipients of these tales of witchcraft and other prodigious feats sought to use the expert testimonies of foreign witnesses to bolster belief in the existence of demonic witchcraft. Occasionally, however, they were invoked in order to question or even contradict elements of traditional demonological thinking. The philosopher John Locke (1632–1704), for example, regularly asked friends and acquaintances travelling to foreign parts to make enquiries on his behalf with regard to witchcraft, seemingly with the intent to refute similar stories at home. In 1673, he engaged William Allestree (1643–1690), then serving as envoy to Sweden, to look into accounts of witchcraft emanating from Lapland at that time. Allestree duly promised to send Locke a translated copy of a recent series of witch trials in Sweden. In the meantime, he regaled Locke with further stories, mostly couched in highly sceptical tones, concluding that the 'extravagancies' of the suspected witches proceeded from nothing other than 'a distempered'd brain, ill diet, and a constant conversation amongst themselves wherein they prepossesse their phansies with the discourses of devils and witchcraft'.⁷⁷ Ten years later, Locke returned to the subject, this time asking Charles Cudworth (d. 1684), brother of his close friend Damaris Cudworth (later Masham), to use his contacts as a factor for the East India Company at Kasimbazar to discover as much as possible about the various practices of the local people, especially 'whether they have any apparitions amongst them and what thoughts of spirits'.⁷⁸ Locke, it should be stressed, never made clear his views on the subject of witchcraft, either in private or public. His interest in such matters, stirred perhaps by his contacts with, and sympathy for, the aims of the

History of Science, 23 (1990), 395. For Boyle's interest in Scottish witchcraft and second sight, in which Scotland is envisaged as a 'laboratory' for the investigation of psychic phenomena, see M. Hunter (ed.), *The Occult Laboratory: Magic, Science and Second Sight in Late Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Woodbridge, 2001), 2–10.

⁷⁶ Nicolson (ed.), *Conway Letters*, 307 [More to Lady Conway, 15 September 1670]; J. Josselyn, *An Account of Two Voyages to New-England* (London, 1674), 23–4, 27–8, 132–4, 182, 194. The latter was dedicated to the president and fellows of the Royal Society.

⁷⁷ E. S. de Beer (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Locke*, 8 vols (Oxford, 1976–89), i, 381–2, 384, 396–7, 410, 421–2. Allestree was the nephew of the Anglican divine and staunch royalist Richard Allestree (c.1621–1681). Lapland was synonymous in early modern Europe with witchcraft. It was also invoked in the partisan political propaganda of the 1680s. Titus Oates, for example, with his 'Lapland acquaintance', was mockingly blamed for the freezing over of the Thames in the winter of 1683–84: T. Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge, 1989), 209.

⁷⁸ De Beer (ed.), *Correspondence of John Locke*, ii, 591; cf. letter of Locke to his old French friend and biblical scholar Nicholas Toinard (1629–1706) in 1681, in which he asked the latter to intercede with François Bernier (1620–1688), who had travelled widely in Asia, to ascertain whether or not 'there is any sorcery, ghosts, oracles' among 'the Eastern peoples', and 'if the Devil appears to these people as he does in America, Lapland, and other pagan lands': *ibid.*, ii, 454.

latitudinarian Whigs, does not appear to have led him to a definitive view on the subject. Indeed, Locke may well have been undecided. The fact that he chose to avoid discussion of any contemporary cases in England, and to focus exclusively on evidence gleaned from the distant lands of 'pagans', suggests that like the circumspect Boyle he was all too aware of the political sensitivity surrounding discussion of domestic instances of witchcraft.

Locke's scepticism with regard to spirits and witches is inferred by both Ian Bostridge and Ann Talbot.⁷⁹ In the absence of definitive proof from the author's pen, I think it might be wiser in this instance to reserve judgement. If Locke believed, as he intimated, that witchcraft was a necessary companion of paganism, and that the Devil continued to ply his trade in foreign, non-Christian lands, then he was not alone. Indeed, it was a commonplace of much Protestant thinking from the earliest days of the Reformation that wherever the gospel was preached and true religion established, the power of the Devil was diminished. It naturally followed that witches, if they existed at all, did so only in those parts of the world that remained unreformed. True godliness, however, lay in the eye of the beholder, and in the absence of Protestant consensus—a fact of life in England from the earliest days of the Elizabethan church settlement—witchcraft, present or absent, was always liable to be invoked by combatants in the confessional battles of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the time Locke came to write his great work on toleration, some of his contemporaries still clung to the view that witchcraft itself might function as a vehicle of religious reconciliation and unity. Locke, too, may have shared such hopes. However, by the time his views on toleration were published, England had become a plural state where religious and political differences were now enshrined in law. Under the circumstances, it is perhaps hardly surprising that overt support for belief in witchcraft shrank to the margins, both in terms of those who chose to publicly defend the reality of witchcraft, as well as those places where one was most likely to encounter it.

Such developments, not surprisingly, encouraged a third type of marginalization within elite understanding of demonology itself, one in which witchcraft, as traditionally understood, played an ever-decreasing role in general assumptions about the Devil and the way in which he interacted with men and women on a daily basis. To some extent, this process was, typically, an integral element of demonological thinking from the outset. It was a commonplace that Satan was a flexible and cunning spirit, a supreme tactician, who repeatedly changed tack in waging war against mankind. He rarely, if ever, adopted a single persona in his dealings with humans, as likely to appear as an 'angel of light' (2 Corinthians 11:14) as in the guise of a cloven-footed fiend. He was, in the words of Edmund Hiceringill (1631–1708), 'a Crafty Politick Devil withall', who nowadays (Hiceringill was writing in 1680 in the wake of the Popish Plot) targeted the rich and powerful in preference to poor and

⁷⁹ Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations*, 97–105; A. Talbot, 'The Great Ocean of Knowledge': *The Influence of Travel Literature on the Work of John Locke* (Leiden, 2010), 45–62. Bostridge nonetheless notes Locke's admission of the possibility of witchcraft in the pagan world: 'He did not rule it out': Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations*, 103.

ignorant old women.⁸⁰ The Anglican apologist Meric Casaubon (1599–1671) had said much the same thing in 1659, when he described the Devil as ‘a notable Polititian’. Casaubon, however, was writing in a different era—one in which it was still, briefly, fashionable to depict the Devil as a multitasker, who employed an array of weapons and strategies in his ongoing battle for the souls of men and women. He thus likened the deluded magus John Dee, and his talk of conversations with angels, to the Anabaptists and schismatical ‘enthusiasts’ of his own day, all of whom, like witches, had entered into covenant with the Devil.⁸¹ Hiceringill’s ‘Politick Devil’ was far less likely to employ such methods to ensnare his victims. By the early 1680s, witchcraft, as a real threat to the body politic, was largely seen by those in power as little more than a powerful metaphor for diabolical evil. Satan now worked his magic in far more subtle ways, intruding evil thoughts into the minds of religious and political disputants rather than entering into real, physical pacts.

The Devil, as Darren Oldridge and Nathan Johnstone have recently reminded us, was by and large most commonly experienced as a mental tempter rather than as a physical presence in the lives of post-Reformation Englishmen and women.⁸² Witchcraft and diabolical possession were thus just two of many weapons in Satan’s armoury, which he employed as and when it best suited. Largely marginalized within English thinking about the Devil after 1660, witchcraft remained, *in potentia*, as a real threat to the body politic as its continued existence in other, less enlightened and pagan lands testified. And under certain circumstances, it continued to resonate and appeal to eighteenth-century Englishmen and women, as the works of Owen Davies and Jonathan Barry have suggested.⁸³ It was not

⁸⁰ E. Hiceringill, *Curse Ye Meroz, or, The Fatal Doom in a Sermon Preached in Guild-Hall Chapell, London, Before the Right Honorable the Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen* [9 May 1680] (London, 1680), 10. Hiceringill was a closet dissenter and religious controversialist, who frequently and deliberately courted trouble with the ecclesiastical authorities. This particular sermon caused a storm of protest and provoked a minor pamphlet controversy: see *ODNB*; J. Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), 358; J. Champion and L. McNulty, ‘Making Orthodoxy in Late Restoration England: The Trials of Edmund Hiceringill, 1662–1710’, in M. J. Braddick and J. Walter (eds), *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), 227–48.

⁸¹ M. Casaubon, *A True and Faithful Relation of What Passed For Many Yeers Between Dr. John Dee . . . and Some Spirits* (London, 1659), E2v. For Casaubon, see above, 268n–269n.

⁸² D. Oldridge, *The Devil in Early Modern England* (Stroud, 2000); N. Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2006). It should be noted, however, that Johnstone’s account ends in 1660.

⁸³ Particularly relevant here is the suggestion that the passage of the 1736 Act, and the decriminalizing of witchcraft, was contingent and not absolute, reflecting the view of many in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that the legal status of witchcraft might be revived in the event of the country’s return to superstition and Catholicism: O. Davies, ‘Decriminalising the Witch: The Origin of and Response to the 1736 Witchcraft Act’, in J. Newton and J. Bath (eds), *Witchcraft and the Act of 1604* (Leiden, 2008), 227–8. And while such a revival never occurred, it is evident that the idea of witchcraft and related beliefs continued to appeal to a wide range of educated Englishmen throughout the eighteenth century, particularly among the marginalized sects and groups that existed uncomfortably on the fringes of the religious and political establishment: J. Barry, ‘Public Infidelity and Private Belief: The Discourse of Spirits in Enlightenment Bristol’, in O. Davies and W. de Blécourt (eds), *Beyond the Witch Trials: Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment Europe* (Manchester, 2004), 117–43; J. Barry, *Witchcraft and Demonology in South-West England, 165–255*; J. Barry, *Raising Spirits: How a Conjuror’s Tale Was Transmitted across the Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, 2013).

therefore argued out of existence, as some have suggested, a victim of its own internal inconsistencies. Nor did it straightforwardly succumb to the onward march of science and reason. While the arguments of medical innovators like Thomas Willis were significant in this process, their selection and application was more often than not contingent upon political and religious considerations. Belief in witchcraft, like so many other fields of human enquiry in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England, including science, medicine, and the law, was subject to the politically charged, ideological conflicts of the age. In the event, its underlying binary logic and theocratic assumptions about the nature of authority were increasingly ill-suited to the cultural and intellectual demands of an emerging pluralistic polity. No longer relevant to the priorities of this new world, support for witchcraft retreated to the margins of respectable belief—discredited, though never entirely vanquished.

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